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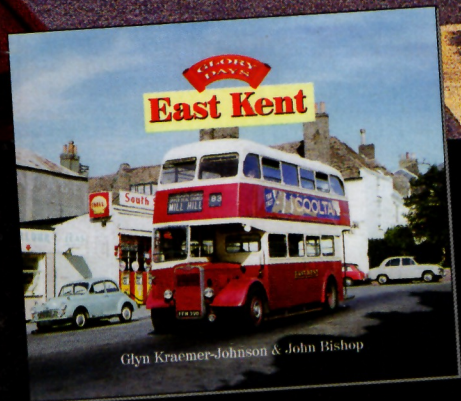
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LIFE ON THE BUSES AFTER 5 MAY

As we close for press, a general election seems certain for 5 May and the outcome looks less predictable than most of the polls were suggesting a few months earlier.

While the concentration of key voters makes it likely that Labour will still emerge with a comfortable — if reduced — majority, an apparent resurgence of Conservative support across England raises a big 'what if?' question that should not be ignored. What if we wake up on 6 May to find Michael Howard smiling on the steps of 10 Downing Street?

Quite correctly, *Buses* stands apart from party politics. Our readers hold the full range of beliefs and opinions and will exercise their democratic rights with reference to their views on many aspects of daily life and not just the rival parties' policies on public transport. Our concern is that the bus gets the best deal from whoever wins on 5 May.

There may have been a time when the choice seemed clearer. Over the 18 years before the 1997 election, the Conservatives were the people who deregulated, privatised, de-integrated and slashed the costs of our bus services while supporting the motorist. Before that election, the endless flow of statements from Labour indicated that it disagreed with much of that, and promised to reverse the modal shift away from public to private transport.

Eight years on, the industry remains deregulated outside London, some of the few publicly owned bus undertakings have moved partially or wholly into the private sector and there is no obvious government enthusiasm for a return to the old regulated ways. Far from it, for Alistair Darling — even more than his predecessors as transport secretary — has made clear that the Blair government is firmly opposed to any such move. It still wants to stop the drift towards the private car — provided motorists don't notice.

And the Conservatives? Their wilderness years appear to have taught them that success for any mainstream political party lies in the centre ground. They talk of maintaining Labour's spending plans, or at least of maintaining the overall sums with different priorities in where it is spent. Where that leaves transport is a mystery, and where it leaves bus policy is an even greater one. But remember that education, health and security are voters' greatest concerns.

If some local political decisions are any guide, then there is cause to worry about the Conservative approach. A park-&-ride site in Poole abandoned by an incoming administration, a key bus lane in Birmingham suspended to benefit car drivers. But that may say more about local priorities than national objectives. Remember also that Edinburgh's Liberal Democrats opposed the city's plans for a congestion charge, even though LibDems nationally favour such schemes. The choices are by no means obvious.

Questioned in a quiet corner, most mainstream politicians would probably concede that public transport should be the mode of choice for some of the expected boom in personal travel needs. And maybe another story that emerged in the week we went to press offers more of an insight — and hope — for the future of the bus.

Of all people, Bentley — the now German-owned luxury car manufacturer — is discouraging its 3,700 employees from adding to congestion by driving to its factory in Crewe. It is offering financial incentives to those who walk to work, priority parking for those who share cars and — in a throwback to the way things were in the apparent heyday of the British bus — it's laying on free buses.

Politicians may huff, puff, blow down some bus lanes and blow in some others, but it's only in the real world that a difference will be made. Bentley isn't laying on buses for political reasons. It's doing so because it makes business sense. And if others feel the same way, then we could be looking at a resurgence in bus use that will prove more powerful than any outcome of any general election, this year or in the future.



ALAN MILLAR



PAGE 7 - A Dart that's no longer Dennis's. JOHN YOUNG



PAGE 18 - Back on the road



PAGE 60 - A day at the races. COLIN MARTIN



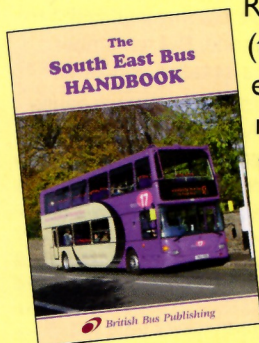
PAGE 34 - The secret of 'ftr'

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BIG GROUPS IN THE FRAME AS GLENVALE GOES UP FOR SALE

First, Go-Ahead, Stagecoach, Keolis and ComfortDelGro are among potential bidders in the frame to buy Glenvale Transport, the second largest operator on Merseyside, which has offered itself for sale.

Former MTL North director Dominic Brady, who owns 49% of the company, set up Glenvale to buy the 120-vehicle Gillmoss depot in north Liverpool from Arriva in July 2001. The Office of Fair Trading had agreed not to refer Arriva's purchase of MTL to the Competition Commission provided it sold a city depot and undertook not to compete against the buyer for three years.

Glenvale grew by competing against Arriva in other parts of the city and by filling gaps in its network. In June 2003, it took over CMT Buses, the city's other remaining larger independent. Glenvale initially adopted the discarded MTL red and cream livery as its own, but later applied CMT's all-red style across the whole fleet, which by then numbered over 300.

When *Buses* interviewed Dominic Brady last year, he was talking of building Glenvale into a 1,000-vehicle business by exploiting opportunities in and well beyond Merseyside. However, it soon emerged that the rival bidders to operate the Merseytram system — consortiums involving French groups Keolis and Transdev — were interested in buying Glenvale, which might otherwise compete against the trams between Kirkby and the city centre. Glenvale fears it might lose up to £10 million revenue a year to the trams.

The Transdev consortium subsequently pulled out, leaving the Keolis grouping as sole bidder for the tram project, which secured £4.9 million of preparatory funding on 1 April but still awaits full government funding.

During March, it emerged that corporate finance advisers Ballard, Campbell & Partners had prepared a confidential document on behalf of Glenvale and circulated it among potential buyers. This has been produced in co-operation with the company's shareholders, the second largest of which (with 40%) is Barings, the merchant bank. Other senior managers, including former MTL London man Ian Campbell, hold the remaining 11% of shares.

The apparent decision to offer the business for sale surprised Transport & General Workers' Union regional officer Colin Carr, who told the *Liverpool Echo* newspaper: 'The company has not consulted us nor included the employees or representatives in this.'

Glenvale bought Gillmoss after Go-Ahead, which had been lined up to buy it, pulled out to



Above: Glenvale has replaced many of the older double-deckers acquired from Arriva. Last July, MCW Metrobus 1211 (B211 WUL) was in Liscard on the Wirral peninsula, on the first and only occasion that one of this type operated cross-river service 432. Many of the buses carry names of employees' family, friends and pets. This is Declan. **KEITH MASON**

concentrate on rail expansion. Its recently promoted chief executive, Chris Moyes, is understood to have retained his enthusiasm to buy the business at the right price. Back then, the other shortlisted potential buyer was Metroline, whose Singapore-based ComfortDelGro parent company wants to increase its UK bus activities.

Neither First nor Stagecoach would likely face any competition concerns were they to buy Glenvale, which has around 30%

of the Merseyside bus market. First's activities are centred on the Wirral peninsula and Stagecoach has no presence in the area.

One issue any buyer faces is improving the age of the Glenvale fleet. While it has withdrawn most of the Leyland Titan and MCW Metrobus double-deckers acquired from Arriva, their replacements are mainly 10-year-old Dennis Darts and Volvo B6s sold as time-expired by Stagecoach and other larger operators.

Below: Although most of Glenvale's recent purchases have been repainted in its all-red livery, 7205 (L708 FWO), a former Stagecoach Volvo B6 with Alexander Dash body, is still in the livery of immediate past owner Ensignbus, which ran it on the Strood rail replacement contract in Kent. **DAVID LONGBOTTOM**



FREE TRAVEL EXTENDED ACROSS ENGLAND

Free off-peak concessionary travel is to be extended throughout England, following chancellor Gordon Brown's budget announcement on 16 March.

Free travel is already available in London, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. But whereas the Welsh scheme covers the whole country and that in Scotland will also in the near future, the £420 million English scheme will be confined to local areas.

The bus operators' trade association, the Confederation of Passenger Transport, has welcomed the move saying it 'will make quality bus services accessible to an even greater

number'. Bus Users UK chair Caroline Cahm also welcomed it in principle, saying the passengers' lobby group appreciates any measure that 'increases bus use and encourages car users to switch to public transport, breaking the vicious circle of increasing congestion and pollution'.

However, she warns the government against diverting existing bus funding into the concessionary travel scheme, which is likely to lead to increased demand for off-peak seats on buses. 'Free travel for old age pensioners is only any use so long as they still have a bus service,' she says.

MORE TO COME AS STAGECOACH ORDERS 340 FROM ALEXANDER DENNIS AND OPTARE

Stagecoach has placed repeat orders for tried and tested Alexander Dennis and Optare buses in what it says is the first part of its 2005/06 new vehicle programme. The announcement coincides with news that Alexander Dennis has secured state funding to help it develop a successor to its Pointer Dart single-decker.

The order announced on 14 March calls for 120 Trident ALX400 double-deckers, 120 Pointer Darts and 50 ALX300-bodied MAN 18.220 full-size single-deckers from Alexander Dennis and 50 Mercedes-Benz-engined 8.5m Solos from Optare, which will join 124 Solos already in group fleets.

All are destined for fleets outside London and are to be delivered between June and next February. Alexander Dennis — in which Stagecoach founders Brian Souter and Ann Gloag have a private shareholding of 30% — values its share of the order at £30 million.

Thirty-nine of the new buses will go to Carlisle, to replace vehicles written off following severe flooding in January. Stagecoach is taking the opportunity to convert all of its city service there to low-floor operation and has called on Cumbria County Council to match its investment with



Above: Another 50 Alexander Dennis ALX300-bodied MAN 18.220s are on order, similar to Stagecoach Manchester 22083 (MX54 LRF). **BEN MORROLL**

improvements to street infrastructure and bus priority measures.

When it announced the order, Stagecoach said it expected to announce further orders 'within the next few weeks'. Orders placed last year included its first 20 Plaxton Profile-bodied Volvo B7R interurban coaches, which have since replaced Volvo B10Ms with its Bluebird fleet in north-east Scotland, and 25 Neoplan Skyliner

double-deckers for Megabus.com inter-city services.

Alexander Dennis says the orders received from Stagecoach and others have allowed it to recruit another 40 employees at its Falkirk body plant, where it already has 750 workers. It has also secured an £800,000 research and development grant

from the Scottish Executive to help it develop new products — including a Pointer Dart replacement — over the next three years.

Bill Cameron, Alexander Dennis's chairman, says: 'Product innovation is not a luxury. It is a must do, both to preserve customers and to open up new markets.'

Below: The 50 Optare Solos follow such recent similar midibuses as 47113 (GX54 DXL) with Stagecoach East Kent in Folkestone. **STEVE RICE**



Below: Stagecoach Oxford recently expanded its Brookes Bus service for students and the general public with five Alexander Dennis Trident ALX400s including 18199 (KN54 ZXP). **JAMES MARNER**



TWO ECLIPSE COMMUTERS DUE

Stagecoach is the surprise first customer for Wrightbus's Volvo B7RLE-based, wheelchair-accessible Eclipse Commuter interurban bus. As reported in Fleet News Scotland this month (see p66), Dumfries & Galloway Council is providing part of the funding for Stagecoach Western Buses to put two on to the council-supported Stranraer-Dumfries route. Besides being almost certainly the first production Commuters, they will be the first-ever new Wright buses ordered for a Stagecoach fleet.

LOTHIAN TURNS TO WRIGHT, VOLVO AND SCANIA

Lothian Buses has delivered a blow to Alexander Dennis by placing its next orders — for 60 buses worth £10 million — with Wrightbus, Volvo and Scania.

After many years of buying Leyland and then Volvo double-deckers, it standardised on Plaxton President-bodied Dennis Tridents, but is known to have been concerned about Alexander Dennis's long-term future and by some aspects of aftersales support for its Cummins-engined buses.

Highlight of the new orders is the first placed for the new Polish-built Scania OmniCity double-decker. It is taking five 12m versions — the first to be built to this length — with 74 coach seats for its Airlink service between Edinburgh Airport and the city centre. It has been operating a 12m East Lancs-bodied Scania OmniDekka

demonstrator in its own livery since last summer.

The bulk of the order is for a lengthened version of the Volvo B7TL double-decker with Wright Eclipse Gemini bodies. Currently available in 10.1m and 10.6m lengths, these extended wheelbase 82-seaters will be 11.3m long — only slightly shorter than Lothian's most recent TransBus Tridents.

Lothian already has seven Plaxton President-bodied B7TLs, but these will be its first Wright-bodied double-deckers. It bought 20 Eclipse Urban-bodied Volvo B7RLE single-deckers from Wrightbus last year for its Fastlink guided busway services and is taking another five to increase passenger capacity. It also is poised to be the first customer for the accessible Wright Eclipse Commuter interurban bus.

DENNIS'S SELLS OUT TO STAGECOACH MANCHESTER

Four years after the two companies were locked in bitterly contested competition, Stagecoach Manchester took over Dennis's Coaches of Dukinfield on 1 April.

All staff and routes transferred to Stagecoach along with the fleet of 31 buses, most of which were new to Dennis's. Stagecoach is keeping the 23 low-floor buses — 18 Dennis and TransBus Darts and five Dennis Trident double-deckers, but five former Go North East step-entrance Darts will likely be sold.

The retained buses will be painted into Stagecoach corporate livery, with the East Lancs Lolyne-bodied Tridents moving into Hyde Road depot — making this the group's only location with Tridents carrying three different body types; it already has Tridents with ALX400 and President bodies.

Formed in 1946 as a taxi company, Dennis's — the name was that of final owner Roy Cooper's grandfather — entered the local bus market at deregulation in 1986 and competed with Stagecoach on the Ashton-Manchester corridor with commercial services 216 and 219. In 2000/01, this reached more serious levels with Stagecoach



Dennis's DT5 (MW52 UJF), an East Lancs-bodied Dennis Trident new in 2002, in service on 30 March, two days before the takeover. **LUKE GOTTARD**

adding Magic Bus journeys on to the corridor and the two companies traded claims of sharp practices at the Manchester city centre terminus. Stagecoach was already committed to increasing

peak period, weekday early evening and Sunday frequencies on the 219 from 3 April and is reviewing the timetables on both routes to cope with increasing traffic congestion.

Dennis's also provided seven tendered services for Greater Manchester PTE — five schools, one Sunday daytime and one Monday to Saturday evening service.

HULL GEARS UP FOR BRIDGE CLOSURE



Bus services in Hull have been increased to cope with the consequences of the eight-month closure of the city's North Bridge from 7 March.

The bridge is the main entry point to the city centre from the north-east and buses have been diverted on to the neighbouring Drypool Bridge, increasing journey times. To cope with this, and an anticipated increase in bus use, Stagecoach has transferred 20 Olympian double-deckers into Hull. Some are fleet additions; others have been

exchanged for single-deckers. Some of the Olympians have come from other Stagecoach East Midlands depots, others from Manchester.

Hull City Council has also introduced additional bus priorities and bus lanes to coincide with the bridge closure and has opened two temporary weekday park-&-ride services in east Hull. Stagecoach operates one from Alexandra Dock, while Alpha Coaches provides the other from the Hull Kingston Rovers rugby ground at Craven Park.

Left: Stagecoach Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart 32083 (M83 WBW) on the Alexandra Dock park-&-ride service. DAVID LONGBOTTOM

SUCCESS IN SWINDON AND CHELTENHAM

Stagecoach West reports early successes for one of its network revamps and its direct mail marketing.

Since relaunching and increasing the frequencies of its services connecting Swindon town centre with Kingsdown, Highworth and Freshbrook with the brand name Popin last November, it says ridership has grown by between 12 and 30%. It introduced low-floor Dennis Darts and a 10min daytime frequency without any public subsidy and promoted the venture by sending travel vouchers to 22,000 homes.

The percentages equate to 114,000 extra journeys in the first 20 weeks — against the background of a 6.5% rise in ridership across all of its Swindon services last year. It is planning to build on this with a telemarketing

campaign to offer half-price travel to over 2,000 households.

While Stagecoach was happy that 8% of the Swindon households responded to the direct mail campaign, the results of a November campaign in Cheltenham were even better. Out of 24,000 homes targeted with a pack including a voucher for a seven-day Megarider ticket worth £14, 24% took up the offer — the highest redemption rate that the group has so far achieved anywhere in the UK.

Stagecoach West managing director Ian Manning says: 'Junk mail will always be unpopular, but our Cheltenham experience proves that a carefully targeted, well-designed mailshot can be a cost-effective means of communicating with potential customers and encouraging modal shift.'

FIRST ORDERS MORE OMNIDEKKAS AND TRIDENTS...



In its latest supplementary order placed in recent months, First has specified a further 31 East Lancs-bodied double-deckers for three of its regional fleets.

Twenty-three will be Scania OmniDekkas, 22 of them for First Edinburgh for routes serving West Lothian where the local authority has dropped plans for quality contract franchising in favour of a quality partnership with First. The 23rd bus will join First Hampshire &

Dorset's X53 Jurassic Coastlinx fleet, which already has five similar buses running on the Exeter-Bournemouth corridor. Unlike those buses, this one will be in corporate Barbie livery.

First Devon & Cornwall has placed a repeat order for another eight Alexander Dennis Tridents with Mylennium Lolyne bodies, also in Barbie livery but otherwise similar to eight specially liveried buses placed in service in March on routes serving the Torpoint Ferry.

Left: First Devon & Cornwall 32759 (WA54 OLN), one of the East Lancs Mylennium Lolyne-bodied Alexander Dennis Tridents for the Tamar Link routes. STEVE RICE

...AS OMNICITY ARTICS ARRIVE IN MANCHESTER

First Manchester unveiled the first of its 18 Scania OmniCity articulated buses — and the first of 278 new buses due over the next two years at a cost of £34 million — in late-March, claiming that it has entered a new era of quality operation.

The £180,000 Polish-built OmniCity artics — similar to those operated by Menzies Aviation on the Heathrow Terminal 5 construction site and to a batch with Travel West Midlands — are designed to carry up to 135 passengers, 58 of them seated. They have closed circuit television and two-way radio and technology ready for the introduction of real time passenger information in Manchester.

As part of a marketing promotion for the route, they are also among the first buses to carry First's new high impact route branding with prominent smiling faces on some of the side windows.

As the OmniCitys enter service during April, they displace six-year-

old Wright-bodied Volvo B10LAs from Overground route 135 between Manchester and Bury, which competes indirectly with the Manchester Metrolink tramway. First is transferring the Volkos to its Manchester-Bolton corridor, where it is developing a partnership proposal for Greater Manchester PTE to convert the route next year to a dedicated 'ftr' corridor for some of First's tram-like Wright StreetCar buses.

A few days later, First unveiled the first of 140 new Wright Eclipse Urban-bodied Volvo B7RLE single-deckers, which will be introduced by September. The initial examples will upgrade high-frequency services 180/184 between Uppermill and Greenfield, Oldham and Manchester. Another 120 single-deckers are to be ordered for delivery between March and September 2006.

Managing director Ian Davies insists that that the company is delivering on its promise to customers and the PTA that it



Above: First Manchester Scania OmniCity 12001 (YN05 GYA) at its 30 March launch. ANDREW JAROSZ

would make significant investments in its fleet. 'From today, the steadily rising numbers of new buses will benefit customers through increased service reliability and more comfortable journeys, as well as directly speeding up engineering tasks and processes. The fleet

upgrade, together with improved partnership working, will help ensure that the county enjoys the quality bus services it needs to ensure its continuing prosperity.'

TICKETS BY PHONE

National Express Coaches has followed the introduction of web-booked e-tickets with the launch of m-tickets, which appear on customers' mobile phone screens. Following trials, they are available to all of its 1,000 destinations.

Karen Beasley, head of customer services, says: 'In order to alleviate the problem of getting tickets to customers at remote locations or after hours, we have added m-tickets to our service offering. There is nothing more frustrating for customers than going through the booking process only to find there is no way to get the tickets to the customer'

ARRIVA/CARDIFF BUS DEAL ON AIRPORT TICKETS

Ordinary bus and rail tickets will be valid on both modes as a result of an unusual agreement between transport operators in South Wales.

Cardiff Bus will accept Arriva Trains Wales tickets on its X91 Airbus Xpress service to the city centre, when the rail service to Cardiff Airport begins on 12 June. Passengers holding bus tickets will be able to use them on the train. The co-operation is an attempt by both operators to maximise the

convenience and flexibility of public transport for airport workers and passengers.

Airbus Xpress — operated by TransBus Enviro300s with extra luggage racks — saw rapid growth in custom in the first three months after its launch on 31 October. By February, loadings were 35% higher than on Cardiff Bus's previous airport service at the same time last year.

Cardiff Bus managing director David Brown says the aim of the

ticket deal is to co-ordinate bus and rail schedules between the city and airport, subject to approval by the Office of Fair Trading. The half-hourly Airbus Xpress (which serves some city hotels) should still be quicker than the hourly all-stops rail alternative, which involves a shuttle bus between the airport terminal and the new Rhoose station. The trains, however, will run direct to the airport from various other places besides Cardiff, including Bridgend.

LONDON COUNTRY GS & RF BUSES

London's Transport Museum
Covent Garden Piazza

PLAXTON DEVELOPS WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE 12M COACH

Plaxton has released drawings of a wheelchair accessible version of its 12m Panther and Profile coaches, which it plans to put into production in the summer.

The new design — with a powered lift in an extended front overhang — combines the technology used in the two-door 12.4m Volvo B12Ms that Plaxton bodied for National Express two years ago with the single-door convenience of the Wright Eclipse Commuter, on which wheelchair users ride on the low front platform. Unlike the Commuter bus, the Plaxton coach allows wheelchair users to travel at the same floor height as other passengers.

Plaxton says the lift — which can be operated from inside or outside the vehicle using a flexible remote control — won't compromise the Disability Discrimination Act-compliant entrance step arrangement. To accommodate the lift and the wheelchair, the front overhang is extended by 400mm and a two-piece door fitted. Normally, only the main rearward section of the door will be opened for passengers boarding and alighting. When a wheelchair passenger uses the vehicle, both sections of the door open to give unimpeded access to the lift.

Once inside, the wheelchair passenger sits in the front nearside space where a double seat would be located on a conventional coach. The wheelchair is anchored securely to tracking in the floor and a separate restraint system is

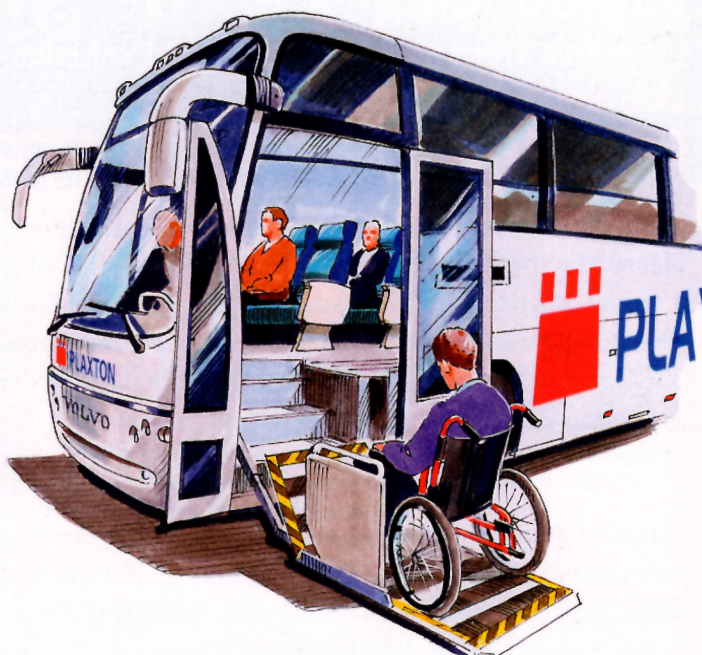
provided for the passenger's security. Ventilation and reading lights are positioned within reach of wheelchair passengers.

'We have explored the whole issue of wheelchair access with operators, disabled people's groups and with the Department for Transport's Mobility and Inclusion Unit,' says Plaxton sales director Kevin Wood. 'And we believe that we have come up with the best possible solution. It means that wheelchair users board the vehicle with the minimum of fuss, and that once on board they are travelling in the main saloon with everyone else on the coach.'

He says the arrangement can be incorporated in a 12.4m coach without any loss of conventional seats. It will be available on 3.66m high Panther coaches in 12m and 12.4m lengths and also on 3.3m high Profile 12m models. The Profile is built currently on Volvo B7R and Alexander Dennis Javelin chassis.

The new design has received government endorsement, with transport minister Charlotte Atkins saying: 'Plaxton is to be congratulated on its achievement, helping to make coach travel more accessible to disabled people and opening up new opportunities for affordable travel where it has not previously been an option.'

A major drawback of the two-door National Express vehicles is that wheelchairs are loaded outside the coach through a separate centre door. This can

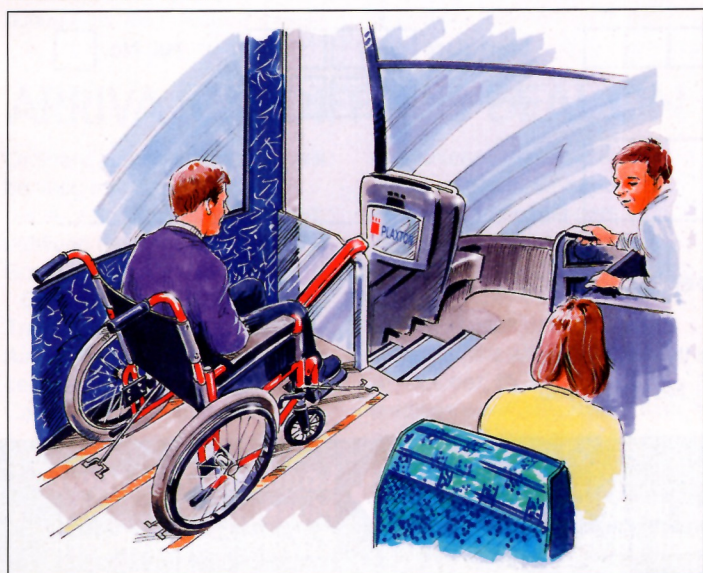


Above: The Plaxton design has a longer front overhang with the wheelchair lift operating largely within the coach.

be uncomfortable in windy weather and doesn't work in coach stations with saw-tooth platform bays. Some question whether wheelchair users would

make long journeys on the low-entry Wright vehicle — which doesn't require a lift — if they are isolated on the front platform away from other passengers.

Below: Once inside, wheelchair users would sit in the front nearside seat area.



PENDLESIDE SERVICES REVERSE RURAL DECLINE



In a joint venture with the Borough of Pendle and the government's Rural Bus Challenge, Lancashire County Council is trying to reverse 40 years of cuts in services to the villages nestling in the shadow of Pendle Hill, near Burnley.

Building on the successful Sunday and bank holiday Pendle Witch Hopper, which meanders through the countryside between Burnley and Clitheroe, this two-route Monday to Saturday network is being provided by Tyrer Tours of Nelson, using six

council-owned Optare buses. Four Solo SlimLines entered service just after Easter on the circular P1 route, linking Blacko, Roughlee, Barley, Newchurch and Higham with Nelson every hour from 07.00 and 22.00.

Two Aleros were due to follow for West Craven dial-a-ride service P2, linking villages like Bracewell, Salterforth and Kelbrook with Barnoldswick, Earby and Colne between 07.00 and 23.00.

Report and picture by PETER HESKETH

SHEARINGS/WA MERGER GOES AHEAD

The merger between coaching giants Shearings and Wallace Arnold was completed in mid-March, following its clearance by the Office of Fair Trading.

3i, the venture capital company behind the merger, has a controlling 67.8% share in the merged business, known for now as NuCo until a new trading name is decided. Management and employees hold the remainder of the shareholding in the £216 million turnover business, which has a combined annual passenger base of nearly one million, a database of over 2.5 million potential customers and nearly 3,500 employees. Combination of assets also gives it 447 coaches and 45 hotels, with over 2 million bed nights in the United Kingdom.

Chairman is Bernard Norman, who was chairman of CHG, Wallace Arnold's parent group. Chief executive John Slatcher and finance director David Newbould held similar positions at Shearings. Two 3i nominees have yet to be announced. WA managing director Ken Meddes, operations director Steven Barber and senior colleagues Bill Maxwell and Nick Gilmour have all left.

The new company will retain WA's Leeds base, with the telesales, finance and transport operation functions being retained for the time being. Operations and feeder services will be restructured immediately and although there will be changes next year, all existing brand names — notably WA's National Holidays, Caledonian Tours and Grand Tourer identities — will continue throughout this year.

The new company name and liveries have yet to be chosen, but John Slatcher says 'people are working on it right now'. Travel agents should receive a combined summer 2006 brochure by September of this year. A decision on fleet replacement vehicles will be announced later this year.

One immediate change is that WA feeder coaches will use the Shearings interchanges at Normanton, Exhall and London Gateway. The focus on Normanton as the Yorkshire interchange means that WA passengers will no longer change coaches at Hartshead Moor, nor will coaches be parked at Crossroads Commercials, the

Volvo dealer there. A decision has yet to be taken on whether to use Aust or Michael Wood services as the West Country interchange.

John Slatcher says the new group's immediate priority is to integrate the two businesses while enhancing the levels of customer service. 'Both companies already have an excellent reputation in the market and the merger will provide us with an opportunity to develop our services further. Among these is our 'tourlink' service that collects customers and takes them to our coach interchanges. Our enlarged database will allow us to cross sell products as we introduce specific customer groups to new products and services,' he says.

Top right: London Gateway (formerly Scratchwood) services on the M1 becomes the new south-east interchange. This was the scene there last June with Shearings Plaxton Panther-bodied Volvo B12Ms MX04 AFJ and MX04 AEM in the foreground. GRAHAM WRIGHT

Bottom right: The well-recognised Wallace Arnold livery will last at least for the rest of the summer season. This May 2003 view shows Sunsundegui Sideral-bodied Volvo B12M YC02 CHK in Bristol. PAUL CHANCELLOR



YELLOW BUSES: THE BIDDING CLOSES

Final bids to buy the Yellow Buses business from Bournemouth Council had to be in by 29 March.

Among the conditions laid down by the Liberal Democrat-controlled council is that the successful buyer will retain the Yellow Buses identity.

With the threat that Wilts & Dorset — owned by Go-Ahead, which is interested in bidding for the company — might introduce open-top buses in Bournemouth this year, Yellow Buses reintroduced its summer seaside service earlier than normal. It started on Good Friday and is due to operate on Sundays and bank holidays until 29 May, after which it goes daily.

Meanwhile, Wilts & Dorset says passenger numbers on its More-branded services between



Above: Yellow Buses has painted surviving Alexander-bodied Leyland Fleetline 138 (VJT 138S) in a modified livery for its service linking Alum Chine and Christchurch. MARK LYONS

Bournemouth and Poole have grown by 25% since the high-frequency services began in December. This follows a 10%

increase in the use of Unilink routes in Bournemouth since it won the contract from Yellow Buses last September.

STL REKINDLES MEMORIES AS MORE ROUTEMASTERS RETIRE

The end of the London Routemaster drew another step closer in the small hours of 2 April, when crew operation ended on Arriva London South route 19 (Battersea-Finsbury Park), leaving just five routes to be converted to driver-only operation.

Their replacements, Alexander Dennis ALX400-bodied Volvo B7TLs and Wright Pulsar Gemini-bodied VDL DB250s began to appear on the route over the last two weeks of crew operation. The last regular working with a conductor was by red RML2347, a former Country Area bus that wore Kentish Bus livery in the early 1990s. The last day of the Routemasters — 1 April — saw the usual appearances by guest historic vehicles. These included the Grey-Green Volvo Citybus in the London's Transport Museum collection and forward-entrance RMA58, which Ensignbus acquired from Liverpool Motor Services.

However, the star of the day was a much older vehicle, the Cobham Bus Museum's 1937 AEC Regent STL2377, which made a few journeys for the benefit of photographers. Among its specially invited passengers was

Buses correspondent John Lidstone, who says: 'Tales of underpowered and poorly-braked SRTs led me to expect a 1937 STL to offer a discernibly weaker performance than the later RT or modern RM. Not a bit of it. It nipped along and stopped among 2005 traffic remarkably happily and had no difficulty keeping pace with modern PSVs, even when half loaded.'

'Many on board commented on its excellent performance. Running early against schedule and having to wait for time on several occasions, it was noticeably more poky than the Iveco-engined RMLs on the 19.'

'Aural effects are delightful, reminiscent of but subtly different from the RT. A particularly rich second gear resounds throughout the bus, set against a background engine note akin to the A177. When ticking over, a very reassuring deep drone also permeates the bus, with more of an RT-like tickover bark. Excellent restoration ensures no bodywork rattles. Ride quality is a little lively, especially on the upper deck. Visibility and ventilation is excellent from comfortable seats.'

Below: Crew operated Arriva Volvo B7TL VLA113 negotiates Cheyne Walk in Chelsea. **MARK LYONS**



SIX CIÉ BOOK WINNERS

The winners of the six *CIÉ Buses* books in our March competition were: Ewan Cameron, Isle of Harris; N.Hebson, Ellesmere Port; T. Jones, Waterlooville; Geoff Lamb, Colchester; Malcolm Redpath, Dunoon; and T. D. Taylor, Gillingham.

Congratulations to all six of you and to all who knew that the correct answers were that Metal Sections supplied the body kits for CIÉ's first Atlanteans, AEC built the AA and AR-class buses and Van Hool teamed up with Irish bodybuilder McArdle.

● Creative Master Northcord advises winners of our Lothian Olympian model competition that these should now reach the UK by early May.



Above: London General RML2520 and Blue Triangle RT3871 overtake STL2377 at Hyde Park Corner on 1 April. **GEOFF RIXON**



Above: Ensignbus RMA58 (NMY 655E) arriving at the north side of Battersea Bridge on one of the extra farewell runs. **GEOFF RIXON**

Remaining routes with Routemasters are London General-operated 14 and 22 (due to lose them in July), London Sovereign-operated 13 and Arriva-operated 38 and 159. Current plans envisage the 159 being the

last, in December. The 38 will be the third RM route converted to articulated single-deckers. TfL still plans to keep some low-emission RMs for a heritage service, and says details of this should be finalised fairly soon.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Go-Ahead has lost the Thameslink rail franchise. It has been excluded from the shortlist for the combined Thameslink/Great Northern franchise for which National Express, First and Stagecoach are among the five shortlisted bidders.

A fire at 2 Travel Group's Swansea depot is believed to have destroyed all five of its MCV-bodied MAN 14.220 midibuses.

Bus Users UK, Transport 2000 and Friends of the Earth are campaigning for the restoration of the Tyburn Road bus lane in Birmingham. They say its suspension is delaying Travel West Midlands articulated bus route 67.

IN BUSES NEXT MONTH On sale 20 May



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- First's rail-replacement coach operation
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ARRIVA FLIES IN EASYJET MAN AS PART OF UK BUS RESTRUCTURE

Arriva has substantially restructured its management team, separating responsibility for its London operations from those in the rest of Britain.

David Martin, who has been with Arriva and predecessors since leading the management buy-out of Midland Fox in August 1987, is promoted from international director to deputy chief executive and managing director, operations. He is responsible for all Arriva's UK and European businesses. UK Bus director **Steve Clayton** — current president of the Confederation of Passenger Transport who joined the group when it acquired Leaside Buses from London Buses in 1994 — moves to the new role of managing director — corporate affairs. He is responsible for human resources, health, safety and the environment, corporate communications and all government relations.

Day-to-day management of the UK bus business is being split between Arriva London managing director **Mark Yexley**, who also joined with the Leaside acquisition, and **Mike Cooper**, who joins Arriva from budget airline easyJet on 1 May as managing director, UK Regional Bus. Mike Cooper spent five years as easyJet's commercial director and was in the travel business from 1996 to 2000, with Thomson Holidays and for three years as managing director of Portland Direct. After graduating from Newcastle University, he held management positions with paint manufacturer ICI Dulux.



Above: Mike Cooper: lands at Arriva from easyJet

FREEMAN MOVES TO STAGECOACH EAST

Stagecoach Warwickshire managing director **James Freeman** moves to Northampton on 1 May to become MD at Stagecoach East, the 300-vehicle business formerly known as United Counties. Previously operations director for Stagecoach South Midlands before the Warwickshire and Oxford operations were separated, he had been in his present post for a year. His latest move sees him succeed **Inglis Lyon**, who joined Stagecoach 12 years ago as a management trainee and is leaving the bus industry to take up the post of managing director at Highlands & Islands Airports.

James Freeman is a 48-year-old career busman and enthusiast who has been a leading light in Friends of King Alfred Buses. He joined the National Bus Company in 1978 as a senior management trainee and was the first managing director of People's Provincial, the only employee buy-out of an NBC subsidiary. He left to join Badgerline as managing director of its rapid transit development business and was still there when Badgerline and GRT merged in 1966 to form FirstBus. He joined Stagecoach in 2001 after a period with Travel West Midlands.



IRISBUS UK APPOINTS MD

Steve Paterson moves within the Iveco group to become UK director of Irisbus, its bus and coach division. He is the long-term successor to **Harry Chambers**, who retired from the post in late-2003. Before taking up his new post, Steve Paterson was director of Iveco's light commercial vehicle business unit. Irisbus commercial manager **Mark Ratcliffe** continues in this role, having also held the MD's responsibilities since Harry Chambers retired.

GERALD TRURAN, ENGINEER AND AEC ENTHUSIAST

One of the bus industry's best-loved characters and a long-time contributor to the pages of this magazine, **Gerald Truran**, died on 11 March after a long illness.

He was born in Cardiff in 1936 and turned a teenage interest in buses — and AECs in particular — into a career by taking up an engineering apprenticeship with BET-owned Western Welsh in 1952. By 1958, he had moved to AEC in Southall writing technical manuals and returned to bus operation in 1960 as a technical assistant at BET's Devon General. In 1965, he moved back to South Wales as chief engineer of the group's Neath & Cardiff express coach subsidiary and went on to write two books on the company's history, entitled *The Brown Bombers*. The revised and updated edition was published in 1998.

After the National Bus Company wound up N&C, he became a vehicle engineer for Calor Transport, but returned to buses in 1972 as chief engineer at St Helens Corporation. Two years later, as Merseyside PTE absorbed the St Helens undertaking, he became chief engineer at Derby City Transport where he oversaw a varied fleet that included one of the few Foden-NC double-deckers built. He retired in 1989.

He was a regular photographic contributor to *Buses Illustrated* and *Buses* from the 1950s and also assisted Corgi with the launch of its Original Omnibus Company diecast model range and remained on its panel of expert advisers. In recent years, he researched the story of bodybuilder Saunders Roe in Anglesey in preparation for the publication of what would have been a fascinating story had he lived long enough to write it.

At 6ft 8in, Gerald Truran was known as the 'gentle giant'. He was a real gent, softly spoken but always a joy to listen to. The many friends who valued his advice and enormous knowledge of transport matters, particularly AEC, will sorely miss him.



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Tata to take over 'troubled' Hispano?

India's Tata Motors — the country's largest automotive business — has acquired a 21% stake in Spanish bus and coach bodybuilder Hispano Carrocera

for around £7.8 million with an option to buy the rest of the £20 million turnover company.

According to a report on Tata's website, Hispano — which has a

25% share of its domestic market and bought the former Van Hool plant in Zaragoza in 1984 — is 'believed to be passing through troubled times'.

It moved into a new factory in 1993 and has invested heavily in new bus and coach bodies.

Tata, which last year acquired Daewoo's commercial vehicle business in Korea, gains access to Hispano's technology and brand rights. Its commercial vehicle director, Ravi Kant, says: 'This strategic alliance with Hispano Carrocera will give us access to its design and technological capabilities

to fully tap the growing potential of this segment in India and other export markets. Besides, it provides us with a foothold in developed European markets.'

Tata, which celebrates its 60th anniversary this year, has been making commercial vehicles since 1954 (initially in collaboration with Germany's DaimlerChrysler, which has a 10.3% investment in the business). It builds 12 to 60-seat buses and, with 59% of the Indian commercial vehicle market, it ranks as sixth largest global manufacturer of medium and heavy commercials and is in an engine-manufacturing joint venture with Cummins.



Left: A Hispano Habit-bodied low-floor MAN in the Spanish city of Alicante.

AUWÄRTER GOES INTO RECEIVERSHIP

Dwindling orders have forced German specialised coach maker Ernst Auwärter to call in the official receiver. Auwärter, based near Stuttgart in the southwestern state of Baden-Württemberg, says it can no longer compete with the increasing number of imported

minicoaches being sold in Germany.

Wage payments to 150 staff were suspended from January and redundancies are likely, but the receiver hopes to continue production of the current range in some form. The £20 million turnover company announced

losses of £980,000 last year — almost four times as much as it lost in 2003.

The collapse was triggered by the insolvency of E. A. Gera in Thuringia, the subsidiary in eastern Germany where Auwärter's mini and midicoaches are assembled.

Ernst Auwärter began making buses in 1928 and has been turning out around 220 vehicles a year. Its best-known products are minibuses on Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis along with the Teamstar and Clubstar luxury midicoaches on Mercedes and MAN running gear.



Left: A German-registered Auwärter Eurostar-bodied Mercedes-Benz O404 in Strasbourg in 2001.

Solaris plans near 50% expansion

Solaris, the Polish bus and coach manufacturer, is aiming to build 724 vehicles this year — up 47% on last year's record sales for this still young company.

Last year, it tripled its profits and doubled its export sales, building 489 buses and trolleybuses — 366 for export to various left-hand-drive European markets, 123 for Poland where it has captured one third of city bus orders. Its confidence this year is founded on its landmark order from BVG in Berlin for 130 Urbino 18 diesel buses with an option to buy another 130 over the following two years. After Germany, its largest export markets last year were Latvia, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Lithuania and Italy.

IKARUS LIVES ON IN RUSSIA

Despite the collapse of Hungarian-based Ikarusbus, the production line at the Tushino Machinery Plant (TMZ) in Moscow, which assembled Ikarus 280.33M and 435 articulated buses from completely knocked down kits, lives on.

Reports from Moscow say that TMZ has acquired manufacturing rights for the 435 model and recently produced examples are

designated Tushino-Avto 6222 under the Russian motor vehicle designation system. Outwardly, they differ from the original only in having the TMZ badge and Tushino-Avto stylised aeroplane and superimposed propeller logo on the front dash. The Tushino Machinery Plant is an aerospace industry enterprise.

The red sign above the nearest headlamp shows a stylised hare with a red line

through it. This indicates that the bus is equipped with the automatic ticket checking system introduced in 2004 with entry via the forward door only.

The Russian word *zayats* (hare) is used colloquially to mean 'passenger riding without a valid ticket' and the signs add a

humorous touch to this generally unpopular system.

Report and picture by
DMITRIY KOMISSAROV



ROME PLACES RECORD GAS BUS ORDER

ATAC, the public transport operator in Rome, has placed Europe's largest ever order for compressed natural gas buses.

It has specified 400 Irisbus CityClass 12m single-deckers with Iveco's newly developed 270hp Cursor 8 CNG engine. This engine has been developed specifically to run on CNG and

offers better exhaust emission levels than the European Union's environmental enhanced vehicle standard. This will comply fully with the Euro5 diesel emission standards due to take effect in 2009.

Once delivered, Rome will have more CNG buses than any other Italian city; they will

account for 25% of its fleet.

Additionally, ATAC has ordered 70 diesel-engined Irisbus EuroPolis 7.9m midibuses with a CRT particulate filter.

The city — which hosts the UITP public transport convention this year — is also in the final stages of opening its new trolleybus system.

Below: One of ATAC's CityClass diesels.



SKOPJE CLEANS UP WITH SAMOS



The municipality of Skopje, capital of Macedonia, has begun to clean up its environment with a new fleet

(LPG) engines, follows a report last September by the Stability Pact Watch Group in the Balkans that

of locally-bodied Mercedes-Benz gas buses. The introduction of the Samos-bodied buses, with liquefied petroleum gas

blamed buses for most of the city's air pollution.

'In general the buses are old and heavily pollute the environment,' it said. 'Research has shown that 60% of air pollution in Skopje is generated by public buses. The situation became even worse when a private consortium started operating the same bus lines with private, even older buses.'

Report and picture by JOHN MARSH

R-SERIES LIVES FOR ARGENTINA

Tamse, the municipal undertaking in the Argentinian city of Cordoba, has selected the spiritual successor of the Ford R-Series to renew its bus fleet.

It is buying 200 Iveco Eurocargo CC 170E22 11.85m long chassis with 2.46m wide 90-passenger bodies built in Argentina by Metalpar. They have front-mounted 210hp Euro3 Iveco Tector engines and six-speed manual gearboxes. This chassis is similar to that on the Scolabus sold by Irisbus in France and the UK.



GUANGZHOU GOES FOR 100% LPG

In an effort to curb the increasing worsening of the air quality in the Chinese city of Guangzhou, the municipal government plans to equip all of its public buses and taxis with liquefied petroleum gas by 2006.

Currently, the public fleets account for 1.15% of the total vehicle population but are responsible for 48-50% of the pollution emission. Eleven out of 13 public fleet companies have 2,331 LPG buses and 6,000 LPG taxis, representing only one third of the total fleets.

UNITRANS HAS ONLY ONE

Further to last month's report on the demonstration of two Alexander Dennis Enviro500 double-deckers to Unitrans in California, Michael Dryhurst points out that only one of the operator's six ex-London RTs — Park Royal-bodied RT2819 — has a Hercules CNG engine. Similar RT1235 is awaiting conversion, while Saunders-bodied RT3123 and Weymann-bodied RT4735 were re-engineered several years ago with Cummins B-series engines and Allison transmission.

DELGRO JOINT VENTURE BUYS 87 VOLVOS

ShenXin Bus of Shanghai — a joint venture owned by Singapore's ComfortDelgro and China's Dazhong Group — has ordered 87 city Volvo city buses on a five-year maintenance deal. Forty will be 12m B7Rs, the other 47 10.5m B6Rs.

VANCOUVER TRIPLES ITS PENALTY FARE

TransLink, the transport authority in the Canadian city of Vancouver, has secured an increase in the fares evasion fine from C\$46 to C\$173 in a drive to discourage ticket violation.

Inside Track

with Andrew Braddock



Why one crew member, two decks and one doorway add up to a slower service

Last month I was just climbing into the saddle of one of my many hobbyhorses, and starting to drone on about the mistake we Brits (and our Irish friends) made in deciding to introduce a form of one-person operation that was bound to slow services down. But by giving the conductor's job to the driver, we did much more than just increase the journey time from point A to point B. We delivered a new excitement to bus travel — complete inconsistency of journey time.

Now remember that we are talking here about the two decades between 1960 and 1980, when the wholesale move to single-manning took place, so there were much lower levels of urban congestion than existed in the succeeding 20 years and it was therefore much easier to go by car.

For anyone with access to private transport (and here we can include motorcycles as well as cars), the deal was pretty simple. Take the bus, it's slower than it used to be and it will take you 15min on a good day and 30min on a bad one — in Bristol, that was always a wet Thursday during school term-time. Or get in your car/on your bike (remember Norman Tebbit?) and it will take no more than 15min, with no waiting time at the stop and even on a bad day the worst would be 20min.

The public transport option offered up to 100% journey time variance (excluding waiting time). The private transport option offered no more than 30% extension to journey time and no waiting. What did people do?

Totally random events

The problem is that the many transactions that became the driver's responsibility were — and still are — totally random events. Does the passenger know his or her fare and even if 'yes' is the answer to that question, has he or she got the right money ready? What if someone expects change from a £10 note?

Even before these issues are considered, what about the time taken by alighting passengers where the bus has only one doorway? With a Routemaster (oh dear, there's the R-word cropping-up for the first time) or any other open rear platform bus, there was more of a doorway-and-a-quarter available, so at least a bit of combined alighting and boarding was possible. Not so the RE, VRT, Atlantean or equivalent.

In truth, and certainly in London, the ability of passengers to leap on or off such beasts as the RM while they were moving did have a small beneficial impact on stop dwell times, simply because fewer people were getting on or off at formal stops. But we should be under no illusion; the benefit was small and it was a disbenefit in other respects, as we shall see when I saddle up the bus priority hobbyhorse.

The harsh reality was that UK-style opo created a kind of Russian roulette of the buses. Not only could you never be sure how long your journey might take (apart from the certainty that it would be longer than it used to be), but there was also some emerging bad news about your waiting time at the bus stop.

Many a learned university professor has come forward to explain the phenomenon of bunching buses, and it can certainly be a hard task. But one clear cause is the random boarding time per passenger previously mentioned. Two, three or even more people at a busy stop wanting change for £5 or £10 notes, and a similar number having no idea what the fare is and — hey presto — on a route with a frequent service the next bus due is already pulling in behind the first one.

Not too difficult, then, to see that if we throw in the effects of traffic delays and the notorious inability of some drivers to follow their schedule (well, it doesn't do any harm to have a second cup of tea and leave the stand late, does it?), then the bunch of buses just grows before our very eyes.

Too much dwell time

Yet a further factor — and I believe we saw this in Bristol as VRT double-deckers replaced the RE single-deckers on most city routes (so that frequencies could be cut and costs saved) — is the additional stop dwell time consumed when more than a handful of passengers alight from the top deck. And you can double that if there is only the front door to alight from.

Worse still, the poor old passengers waiting to board the bus with only one door suffer an additional journey time penalty as they wait for everyone to alight. The comical extreme of this situation is to be seen in O'Connell Street in Dublin when an articulated bus unloads a full complement of

passengers through the front door while its driver follows a trade union diktat not to open the second door at the rear of the bus.

Next time (after an interlude with good old BC in the May issue) we will see what happened in the same challenging 20 years from 1960 to 1980 in Switzerland and elsewhere.

Left: Passengers boarding Dublin Bus articulated Volvo AW4 (00 D 65004) on 24 March. The rear doors of the Wright Eclipse Fusion-bodied B7LA are firmly closed and alighting passengers will have exited through the front doorway. DARREN HALL



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New publications for the Spring

- London Bus Magazine** (no. 131) includes articles on *Airbus, London Country Bus Services Central Works, More Destination Blinds, AEC Swifts in Malta and London Country to Arriva Southern Counties* as well as the usual *Around & About* quarterly review. As normal, and where possible, this glossy magazine is lavishly illustrated in colour. £5.00 (£4.00 to members).



- Service Vehicle Fleet History** – This new publication is the first full update for over 25 years and covers the years from 1914 to 2005 with some 6200 vehicles listed by number, registration, type and all known allocations. A4 size 112 pages, with over 100 illustrations including 15 in colour - £9.00 (£7.50 to members).



- London Bus and Tram Fleetbook 2005** – up-to-date to March 2005, includes almost 10,000 vehicles with all the leading operators in London and the home counties in one handy A6 pocket sized publication. Order now, before stocks run out again - £7.00 (£6.50 to members).



- And don't forget that the **Autumn Transport Spectacular** will be at Harrow on the 29th October.

Happy Birthday Waterden Road Garage Stratford!

Saturday 25th June 2005

Opening time: 11am - 5pm

Admission FREE (souvenir programme available)



To help celebrate one year of operations from our new East London depot and the first anniversary of the ending of Stagecoach Routemaster services, we shall be holding an open day at Waterden Road Garage.

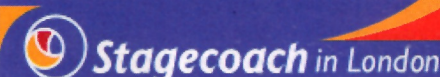
Sited within the garage and operating local services on the day will be a wide variety of vintage and modern buses complemented by numerous exhibitors and trade stalls. Details of our special bus service timetable will be published nearer to the event on the Stagecoach London website.

www.stagecoachbus.com

All monies raised on the day will be donated to charity.

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please contact:

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Telephone: 020 8510 4880
email: jon.batchelor@stagecoachbus.com



Fifty quid Guy lives its dream



On its inaugural run at the Cobham open day, G351 takes invited guests over the Painshill roundabout with 1938 Green Line AEC Regal 10T10 coach T504 in close pursuit. **GEOFF RIXON**

Inset: Former owner Rev John Lines speaking at Cobham.

The return of London Transport's last wartime utility double-decker was the highlight at the Cobham bus rally and Wisley Airfield gathering on 3 April. Report by **ALAN MILLAR**, who took most of the pictures

It says much of the low esteem in which London Transport held its hundreds of wartime utility double-deckers that only one of them has survived in preservation.

G351, a Park Royal-bodied Guy Arab II, was built to the 'relaxed utility' specification in 1945 and entered service in February 1946, after hostilities ended. Its upholstered seats, 10 opening side windows and glazed upper deck emergency door made it luxurious by comparison with many of the wooden-seated buses that preceded it over the previous four years.

All were built with minimal materials, often of poor quality, and were not expected to last more than eight years. They also were built to a standard national specification, which presented operational problems in London where the 14ft 6in high utilities could not be accommodated in garages built for 14ft 3in standard double-deckers. G351 went to Upton Park, one of several East End garages with sufficient headroom.

By comparison with London's AECs, the Guys were primitive, with crash gearboxes and five-cylinder Gardner engines — something all too apparent as G351 returned to the road at the Cobham Bus Museum's annual rally on 3 April on a ceremonial run to and from the vehicle gathering at the nearby Wisley Airfield. It may be mechanically solid, but it is slow and ponderous and this contributed to their early demise and indeed to their replacement by older STLs in many garages. G351 was withdrawn in 1952 and disposed of to a dealer who sold it and others to Burton upon Trent Corporation.



Above: G351 basks in spring sunshine at Cobham while some of the record numbers of visitors mill around the sales stalls in the museum building behind.

That proved to be the salvation of G351. In 1965, John Lines — then a police motorcyclist, now an ordained minister — bought it for £50 at the end of their second lives in the Midlands. That price bought him a bus minus engine, gearbox or radiator and the body was in poor condition. He later donated the Guy to Cobham, whose volunteers have undertaken a massive —

and masterful — body and chassis restoration job over the past six years with financial assistance from the Science Museum's Re:source Fund. As he performed the honours of handing G351 back to his friends at Cobham, a rightly emotional John Lines commented: 'In 1965, I had a dream of what this bus would look like. Today, it looks better than I dreamed then.'



Top left: Among the many vehicles at the Wisley gathering was East Kent FFN 451, a centre-entrance Park Royal-bodied Leyland Royal Tiger coach new in 1951.

Top right: One of the smartest presented rear-engined buses at Wisley was the First Essex heritage fleet Bristol VRT/SL3 in post-privatisation Eastern National livery. Would that some of First's newer Barbie buses looked this good.



Centre left: Seen arriving at Wisley is Emsworth & District OUC 45R, an MCW-bodied Leyland Fleetline FE30AGR new to London Transport as two-door DMS2045. It was among these prematurely withdrawn London buses sold to Hants & Dorset in National Bus Company days.



Bottom left: Preserved Reading Corporation buses at Wisley included East Lancs-bodied Dennis Loline 76 (GRD 576D).

ANOTHER CHANGE AS NATEX GAINS THE 188

The latest round of tender results sees National Express Group's Travel London gain the 188 (Russell Square-North Greenwich) from London General and the 343/N343 (New Cross-London Bridge) from fellow Go-Ahead company London Central. These two should go a long way towards filling Travel London's Walworth garage (In London last month). Indeed, add one more service and Walworth will be full.

The same round of contract awards sees Stagecoach Selkent retain the 47/N47 (Shoreditch-Catford). All three routes will gain new double-deckers, the Travel London ones because it is a newcomer and the 47/N47 because Stagecoach will no doubt transfer the existing low-floor double-deckers to another part of its empire. Peak vehicle requirements remain the same for all three routes — 17 for the 47, 22 for the 188 and 20 for the 343.

The 188 has had more than its fair share of operators over the past 17 years. Back in November 1988, it was won by the only municipal operator of London services, Boro'line Maidstone, which ran it for two years before Selkent won it back for London Buses.

In 1993, it was taken over by London & Country, which became Londonlinks, then Cowie South London, Arriva London South, Arriva London North East (Monday to Saturday) and Arriva London South (Sunday), Arriva London North East, Arriva London North and, until next December, London General. Regardless of operator, the 188 still stops short of its previous terminus, Euston, and goes no farther than Russell Square, which seems to be

an operational convenience rather than serving its logical traffic objective.

The big talking point on route tendering is the emergence of a second newcomer in a matter of months, National Car Parks, as mentioned last month. I cannot help thinking that its appearance — and that of Centra (the bus division of Central Parking Systems) — last year is at least partly because of the publicity

given to the high profits and remarks by the major groups, which all benefited from the pre-congestion charge service expansion.

As I've said before, first-year profits are easy, but it is difficult to make money towards the end of a five-year contract. So far, NCP has yet to announce its vehicle choice, but I would not be surprised to see something unusual being specified for London.



London & Country bought 15 ex-London Buses Leyland Titans to take over the 188 contract in November 1993. This picture taken the following spring shows 923 (KYV 408X) — originally T408 — at Euston station, which no longer is the northern terminus. **ALAN MILLAR**



100% red glass: In what appears to be a drastic attempt to deter glass etching, Arriva London South has covered the top-deck windows of Wright Pulsar Gemini-bodied VDL DB250 DW63 (LJ04 LDD) with red film. Unfortunately, even this has proved insufficient to deter a vandal who has sprayed silver graffiti above the back wheel. **EAMONN KENTELL**

TfL DEFINES ETB'S ROLE

The implication of an earlier round of contract awards has only just sunk in. First Capital's loss of 11 buses' worth of peak hour work attracted most of the attention. But Transport for London's own East Thames Buses subsidiary loses two routes and 23 peak buses' work — out of a peak turnout of 99 buses.

When it was first established, East Thames took over both the 128 (Claybury-Romford) and 150 (Becontree Heath-Chigwell Row) following the failure of Harris Bus and an apparent lack of interest by other operators in taking on the work. Or at least in taking it on at a price TfL was then willing to pay.

Now, we're told that East Thames Buses aims to be a flagship operation setting an example, rather than one picking up the pieces, though quite recently it did just that, taking on the 42 (Liverpool Street-Denmark Hill) and 185 (Victoria-Lewisham) after the collapse of London Easilink.

So what happened this time round? Did East Thames Buses put in prices that were too high, or did its sometimes-low position in the reliability statistics tell against it? Or is it that running routes a distance away from Ash Grove garage is too expensive?

SHORT HOPS

The London Transport Users' Committee has launched a full inquiry into the Mayor of London's proposal to make all bus travel free for the under 16s at an annual cost of £60 million. LTUC is concerned about the effects on other passengers.

Pre-Pay Oyster cards are now capped so that bus or tram passengers pay no more than the cost of a one-day Bus Pass in order to pay the lowest total fare. Tube passengers who may also use buses will pay no more than the cost of a one-day Travelcard. Oyster Pre-Pay users pay £1 for bus travel between 06.30 and 08.30 and 80p at other times — an arrangement LTUC says is 'completely daft' — but 80p at all times on Routemasters.

EasyBus has succumbed to the inevitable and accepted that people want to go to Central London. It has moved its inconvenient terminus from Hendon Central to Gloucester Place.

THE CASE FOR WEST LONDON TROLLEYBUSES

The long and twisted path towards the reintroduction of trams in west London is not proving smooth. The inevitable public consultation exercise, said to have cost £1 million and to have been the largest such exercise conducted by Transport for London, found that two thirds of the 17,000 people who completed the questionnaire were against the £648 million West London Transit scheme.

Mayor Ken Livingstone says these results are 'unscientific' and a recent TfL press release says that a subsequent sample of just 815 people shows 54% support for the tramway. That sounds a bit dubious to me. It is so easy to slant the questions in favour of the required answers that are required — just as I suspect that market research results on articulated buses in London are sometimes obtained by similar means.

The real problem, however, is that any major project like West London Transit is almost bound to attract more 'not in my back yard' opponents than supporters. The tram scheme involves some demolition of property at pinch points with diversion of road traffic except trams, and that is bound to be unpopular. But the already bad traffic congestion in, say, Southall will get even worse if nothing is done.

One answer just might be to look more seriously at trolleybuses. The Electric Tbus Group has produced detailed proposals for what it calls route 907. It would be operated by double articulated 25m long trolleybuses costing around £500,000 each. They would have an estimated life of 30 years, with a major mid-life refurbishment. They would each carry up to 200 passengers against the estimated

300 for the trams, would be quieter on curves than trams and able to overtake diesel buses.

Trolleybus journey times, it is claimed, would be equal or better than trams, with a more frequent service because of their lower capacity. Twelve trolleybuses would be needed off-peak if the route ran only between Shepherd's Bush and Hayes, 16 if extended to Uxbridge; peak requirement would be 26 or 33. If more stops were added than is proposed for the trams, the peak requirement rises to 35 or 47.

The detailed costings allow for a maintenance cost of 50p/km, total revenue of £28 million or £35 million a year and a so-called profit of £17 million or £23 million a year. Such well worked-out figures and details merit closer study and trolleybuses might be more acceptable to the residents than trams.

TIP-UPS TIPPED OUT IN SAFETY CAMPAIGN

I hear that Transport for London now bans tip-up seats on new buses because they are seen as a potential safety hazard. They have always seemed to me to be a useful facility, allowing a wheelchair space to be occupied by an ordinary passenger if there is no wheelchair user on board.

First London has not fitted any tip-up seats for some time, but now the others will have to follow. Presumably operators will be able to fit backrests or 'bum perches' in these spaces, to give standing passengers a modicum of comfort.

Other similar measures may follow, as London operators are now required to carry out and document a risk assessment for each tendered route. These are designed to cover potential hazards that might not be obvious to a new driver on a route, so cobbles,

adverse cambers, low railway arches, trees too near pavement edges, traffic lights with less-than-obvious conflicting flows should be covered in words and, sometimes, in pictures.

Given the accident statistics for London buses that I mentioned last month, I suppose that it is essential. Indeed, the London Assembly is to investigate the accident record of buses. And the law requires any business employing five people or more to produce a risk assessment. But one might argue that TfL rather than individual operators ought to undertake the task, given that many stretches of road are covered by several operators.

This also is an area where driving standards are critical. Driver recruitment remains difficult and the standard of some drivers remains lower than ideal, despite the

worthwhile wage increases paid in recent years. The Driving Standards Agency already monitors drivers across the fleets. Its plain-clothes men board buses at random, taking a 20min ride to assess drivers in three categories: passenger consideration, driving ability and other safety issues, awarding points (or otherwise) for each. Copies of the assessment are sent to operators and TfL.

In the halcyon days of London buses, a splendidly uniformed inspector with his own uniquely coloured cap badge investigated the relatively rare cases of bad driving. The theory was that if a driver could not drive well with this man on his bus, then he must be really bad. In those days too, his conductor would probably soon have been round to warn him of who was on board.



Transport for London's requirement for mainly red buses is steadily eliminating some of the colourful eccentricities from the capital's tendered bus fleets. While not yet 100% red, Metrobus's latest East Lancs-bodied Scania OmniDekkas — like 495 (YN54 AJV) — have blue relief confined to their skirt area.

SWANSWELL

Whatever happened to...? ...easyBus minibuses

Our May 2004 issue brought news that Stelios Haji-Ioannou's easyGroup had reached agreement with Julian Peddle's Status Group for Status subsidiary MK Metro to operate its low-cost easyBus minibus service between Milton Keynes and north London.

MK Metro would provide the drivers and maintenance and garaging facilities on the service, which began its non-stop service of orange minibuses on 19 August. It followed this with a Luton Airport link on 13 September, also terminating outside Hendon Central Underground station. Drivers for the second service were employed by Lutonian Buses, owned by Centrebus of which Julian Peddle also is a director.

EasyBus has yet to expand beyond its initial fleet of 20 Mercedes-Benz Sprinters, but a recent fundamental change in the service has been to extend it into central London to Gloucester

Place, the site between Baker Street and Marylebone stations that Stagecoach used for its Oxford Megabus.

When it started, easyBus offered on-line fares of between £1 and £5. Over Easter, its website was quoting between £1 and £6, with £4 being the most common fare for journeys booked more than a day in advance.



Are you into odd numbers?

My good friend Gavin Booth has passed on a cutting from *Traction*, one of the many railway magazines on the market, in which readers appear to have owned up to a quirky little hobby. Of only photographing locomotives with odd numbers. Anyone out there do the

same with buses? Or do you prefer to go only for new-style registrations ending in vowels, consonants, Xs or Zs? Whatever your photographic fetish — provided it's along these harmless bus-related lines — why not drop me a line and share it with your fellow readers?

WRITE DIRECT TO MILLAR'S TALES

Please send any stories, photos (prints or slides), cuttings and other information on off-beat bus matters direct to:

Buses

PO Box 3759,
Glasgow, G41 5YN

Routemasters for another 15 years?

My thanks to Howard Williams for passing on a copy of the cover of the spring edition of *Amicus's The Magazine*. For it seems that the trade union's members are confident that the Routemaster will defy Transport for London's plan to retire the last of them by the end of this year.

At least one of them, it seems, will still be around in 2020 when global warming finally engulfs Parliament Square in a flood of Biblical proportions.

Mind you, the Amicus people should perhaps have a word with the publishers of souvenir postcards of London. While Mrs M and I were passing through Stansted Airport before Easter, I was amused to see that one of them has already banished Routemasters from the 'red London bus' slot in its montage of iconic scenes.

One version showed a Metroliner Plaxton President, which at least is still of the correct proportions to be a proper London bus. The other, let it be whispered in some quarters, was of a Citaro bendibus.



RLHs in Wolverhampton?

The Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, meantime, has been displaying one of the least iconic traditional London buses on its spring programme.

An amateur group is putting on the stage version of Cliff Richard's *Summer Holiday* on 19 to 23 April, telling the musical story of a group of friends who borrow a London bus and head

for fun on the Mediterranean. In the film, the bus was an RT. The programme suggests that Wolverhampton's will be a lowbridge RLH-class AEC Regent III — RLH48 indeed — making a rare appearance on route 9. The programme cover suggests its Weymann body has been adapted for use on the Continent. My thanks to K. T. Hobday for passing it on.



BATTLE BUS OF THE MONTH

It's not every day that a communication arrives from our forces in Iraq, which helps explain why this month's winner of a Corgi 1/76th-scale diecast model of a weird bus image goes to Sgt Robby Robinson, who e-mailed it from Camp Slayer.

He tells me he's still trying to track down an Atlantean in service there, but meantime informs that this is one of the so-called 'Rhino buses' that the United States forces use to transport personnel between the international airport and their various operating bases. He wonders if this could be the future shape of yellow schoolbuses in allegedly more peaceful parts of the planet.

Keep your eyes open and your camera primed for your own offbeat colour picture opportunities and send the results to me at the usual address. You, too, could win a Corgi diecast.

For further information on Corgi, visit the website at www.corgiclassics.com or for details of your local stockist, call Corgi customer services on 0845 603 9070.



ANYONE REMEMBER THIS FILM?

Reader Simon Clark hopes someone out there will remember a television documentary — possibly by the BBC — about women bus drivers. It was made at a time when there were even fewer in bus industry employment than there are today and at least some of it was shot in Coventry, where the municipal undertaking was among the first operators to

put women in its bus cabs. He thinks it may include some of the only footage of Coventry Corporation buses when they were still red. If any of you remember when and by whom this was broadcast, or better still have a copy, please drop me a line so I can pass it on to Simon. There might even be a diecast model available as a reward.

ENQUIRE WITHIN London Forest and all that jazz

I'm taking this opportunity to follow up another of Myles Chantler's queries about relatively recent bus operator developments (March 'Tales').

This month's questions and answers are all about the London Bus subsidiaries formed as a prelude to privatisation — and especially the short-lived London Forest. London Buses' mainstream operations were divided up among 11 subsidiary companies in April 1989. These were London General Transport Services, East London Bus & Coach Company, South East London & Kent Bus Company, South London Transport, London United Busways, Leaside Bus Company, London Central Bus Company, CentreWest London Buses, London Northern Bus Company, Metroline Travel and London Forest Travel.

London Forest operated 360 buses from Ash Grove, Leyton and Walthamstow garages. In 1991, it submitted the winning tenders for 11 routes around Walthamstow and imposed lower wage rates on its existing employees, who soon embarked on an all-out strike. London Transport then reallocated the contracts to County Bus, Ensignbus and Thamesway.

London Forest promptly announced that Walthamstow garage would close, then the company itself was closed down. Ash Grove was also closed (it has since reopened) with its work going to East London, Leaside and London Central. East London took over Leyton. London Forest's former managing director, Tom Young, set up Choice Travel in the West Midlands in March 1992 and still runs it today.

Bigger buses for Edinburgh. . .

Buses readers' taste is nothing if not catholic, for not only does the good Mr Booth read *Traction*, but Doug Jack has passed on a copy of the December issue of *Software for Road Infrastructure*, a special supplement to *World Highways*.

I don't know how deeply he is into highway management matters, but as a dyed-in-the-wool busman, his eyes alighted on a

feature showing how computer simulation could help determine traffic light sequences in Edinburgh. Clever as the simulation may be, the really clever bit is how computer graphics have also created a new generation of tri-axle Lothian double-deckers, like the harlequin-liveried one passing the junction of Princes Street and the Mound.



. . .and a smaller one



While computers may be simulating gigantic buses for Edinburgh's future, Richard Walter has uncovered a roundabout way of running smaller ones in his home city. This one, in a well executed representation of traditional Edinburgh madder and white, was in a funfair attached to one of the main retail centres over the Christmas period.

"Another new publication now available"

London Buses in 2004



Buses in London in 2004 will be remembered for many reasons — including Routemaster 50, Armchair, fuel cell buses, Thorpes, the special operations to commemorate last days of crew operation on routes, goodbye to the Metrobus, all over adverts and Bendybuses are all covered. This book is a review of the routes, vehicles, operators, significant events as well as the politics of the year that make up the story that was 2004; 64 pages fully illustrated in colour. £7.00 (£6.00 to LOTS members).

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Should bus companies be like Tesco?

MICHAEL BEST argues the case for bus companies being managed locally with a local identity

Some of the big bus groups give the impression of wanting to be like Tesco, a national retailer, but selling bus travel rather than food. Tesco is a successful retailer, a well-known name, and most of us do our shopping there, or at one of the other superstores, every week. We wouldn't dream of trying to do our main weekly shop at a little corner shop. So why should it be any different for buses?

One reason is that the superstores are the only place to get all your shopping under one roof. It is far quicker and easier to shop there than to go to the baker's, then the butcher's, then the greengrocer's and so on, so superstores only really compete among themselves. With transport, it's generally the car that's the mode of first choice and people need to be persuaded actively to use other modes for local travel.

All or nothing

With superstores, you might find that you have 100 items on your shopping list and although one or two are sold out, you could at least buy 98% of what you hoped for. With a bus, it's all or nothing. It either turns up more or less when it should, or it doesn't. If it doesn't turn up or is very late, that's like going to Tesco and finding it unexpectedly closed or most of the shelves empty — which just doesn't happen in practice.

If a checkout operator phones in sick, you might have to queue a minute or two longer as one fewer checkout is open — but you

probably wouldn't even notice. In any case, they would probably re-deploy someone filling shelves to cover. With a bus company, if a driver goes sick or the bus breaks down, the bus may not run.

Once a superstore is built and open for business, it gets on with it. Many are open 24hr and you don't have to interact with anyone when you arrive. You just go in and do your shopping.

Buses need constant assistance from local authorities to run their buses properly — bus priorities, tendered services, real time information and so on. Successful bus companies need the support of a local authority favourable towards public transport, and this support has to be earned by doing what they do well, as well as working to make buses an integral part of the community they serve. Where two or more bus companies serve one local authority area, or where a bus company has two or more local authorities to work with, the situation becomes even more critical.

Because there are so many potential obstacles to running an efficient bus service all day, every day, bus companies need to do much more work than superstores to win over the hearts and minds of the local community and local authority.

And because this work needs to be done, bus companies need to be perceived as part of the community they serve. People need to see that the fares they pay and the subsidy they provide are repaid by re-investment in

the business. By overdoing the 'national, corporate' image the perception shifts to remote shareholders being the beneficiaries. People believe that some other part of the empire is getting a better deal than they are. Trades unions are more likely to compare pay and conditions elsewhere in a group than the more 'corporate' the group presents itself.

Play the card with discretion

There are certainly advantages for a bus company to be part of a group, as big groups have better bargaining power with suppliers, and economies of scale can be made. On occasions, it can be to a bus company's advantage to be seen as part of a bigger group. But if it's not too obvious, the 'group' card can be played when it suits. When a group becomes too corporate, then it's there for all to see, in good times and bad.

If Tesco introduces a new product or facility, then it will be on sale or available in all its superstores — so it can quite rightly publicise it. If a corporate bus company publicises its national investment in new buses, because they can't be everywhere straightaway many people will be cynical when the same old bus turns up for them. When a local company publicises its new buses, people see them straightaway.

So buses and superstores are different. Buses need to be perceived as being part of the community they serve to earn the support they need in order to operate at their best. Being too 'corporate' will only serve to alienate the very people that they need to keep on board.

Below: Although it's part of the Go-Ahead Group, the Oxford Bus Company portrays itself as a local bus company with its own identity, as worn by Mercedes-Benz Citaro 834 (X4 OXF).





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E24904	Plaxton Beaver 1 South Wales	£15.75



E26315	Guy Arab II Utility Southdown	£18.75
E26805	Leyland Tiger Duple Ribble	£18.75
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E29803	Wright Pathfinder Badgerline	£15.75
E29902	AEC Regal 10T10 Greenline	£18.75
E30201	AEC Routemaster RM1 London Trans	£18.75
E99640	Leyland PD2 Todmorden L.M.S	£12.75
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Aiming for gold

DAVID FANNING explains why Cardiff Bus wants to become the UK's best bus company within three years

By any yardstick, Cardiff Bus is the single most important operator in south-east Wales. It has come a considerable way since Cardiff Corporation bought Cardiff Tramways in 1902 and brought the company into public ownership. It capitalised on the closure of National Welsh in 1992, allowing it to extend its services into the Vale of Glamorgan and surrounding areas. It has long operated as far east as Newport and now goes as far west as Llantwit Major.

Managing director David Brown has no doubt about the future for the council-owned operator. 'Our passion is to be the best.

Cardiff Bus has set itself the goal of becoming the best public transport operator in Britain within three years.' His ambitions, which include bringing Cardiff Bus into the top league of the best Welsh companies to work for, may seem far-flung but the evidence so far suggests he and his colleagues will get there.

In his words, the foundations for a successful and profitable future are in place, a view shared by his chairman, Cllr Steve Pantak, who says: 'Over the past five years, we have spent £15 million on introducing modern low-floor vehicles and we are committed to a rolling programme of new

Above: Pointer Darts are standard Cardiff buses these days, as evidenced by this city centre line-up beneath 2005 centenary banners. The leading vehicle is Plaxton-bodied Dennis 384 (Y384 GAX).
SWANSWELL

vehicle investment costing around £4 million a year.' Altogether, including substantial investment in new equipment, Cardiff Bus plans to spend £18 million over the coming four years. There is a strong commitment to upgrading the bus fleet and maintaining an average age of five years.

The fleet today

Currently, it operates 234 buses: 105 midibuses, 102 larger single-deckers and 27 double-deckers. The workhorses are Dennis/Plaxton, TransBus and Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Darts — 40 of them around five years old, 20 on average three years old. Over the past year, it added 12 TransBus Enviro300 single-deckers; six are 43-seaters, the other six are 40-seaters with extra luggage space for the Bmibaby-sponsored airport service.

The double-decker fleet is, on average, nearly 12 years old but also includes significantly older Volvo Ailsas. There is every intention of replacing these shortly, possibly with articulated buses. It has looked at the Mercedes-Benz Citaro G and Scania OmniCity, but no decision has yet been made.

The most recent financial results for Cardiff show just how well the company has been doing — and how much the public has taken to its buses. Passenger numbers are



Left: The old order is represented by a steadily declining double-deck fleet. Most are Volvo Ailsas, some bought new, others like 454 (A974 YSX) bought secondhand. It came from Stagecoach Fife. **SWANSWELL**



Above: TransBus Enviro300 701 (CN04 NPV) wears Bmibaby sponsorship livery for the airport service. MARK LYONS

rising steadily, up by around 4%-5% over the past three years to 26 million journeys a year, with revenues growing by almost £1 million in 2003/04, and profits jumping to around £650,000. David Brown says that a year-on-year increase of around 2 to 3% in passenger numbers can be expected over the coming four years.

He and Steve Pantak are convinced that customer satisfaction is one of the crucial factors in this success. 'The major revision of our network services is complete,' says David Brown, 'and we can now build on the strong foundations that have been established. The Cardiff Overground — our core network based on successful high-frequency, easy to understand and direct routes — will remain intact.'

Where commercially viable, these 23 routes will be extended and service frequency increased. The remaining 42 routes will, wherever possible and feasible, be upgraded.

The company has no illusions about the challenges it faces in pursuing its goals. Under previous managing director Alan Kreppel, who retired in May 2004, Cardiff Bus concentrated on building on its first 100 years of service to Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. David Brown's task is to ensure the future of the company for the century that lies ahead.

'The growth and transformation of Cardiff Bus over the past five years has taken courage and determination, and the pace of change has been often relentless, creating challenges for both staff and customers.'

What has evolved, he emphasises, is a 'business that has completely reinvented itself, with a new image, a sound financial base and an increasingly effective industrial relations policy'. In addition, there has been a continuing programme of modernisation across the company.

'We now have a network designed for the 21st century. The foundations for the future are well and truly in place, and we can start to consider what kind of long-term structure we wish to build.'

Council wants to keep it

Cardiff Bus is a testament to the goodwill and commitment of Cardiff Council, which has stressed repeatedly its determination to keep the company in council ownership, even when faced with the possible financial advantages of a profitable sale to the private sector. 'The company has the full support of the council,' says Steve Pantak. 'Relations between Cardiff Bus and the council are always inclusive. We do not see the company as just another council committee activity. We are here to oversee the business, not run it day-to-day.'

David Brown sees council ownership as a major financial and logistical advantage. One boon, he says, is that the company does not have to be worried about shareholders' demands. 'As a community-owned company, Cardiff Bus does not have to satisfy the stock market's need for short-term results. It is able to take a longer-term and broader view of its business development.'

Working closely with council members and executives is crucial to the company's future, he adds. 'We must each understand the other's views and there must be a continuous engagement between the

Below: One of the last Leyland Lynx 2s in the Cardiff fleet, 267 (J267 UDW), in service last September. MARK LYONS





Above: Oldest midibuses are Optare MetroRiders, including 138 (N138 PTG) in the fast disappearing orange livery. **SWANSWELL**

company and local and national politicians and community representatives.' It is in this aspect of its strategic and tactical operations that Cardiff Bus has been most effective, and from which it has drawn most of its public support.

Equally, the strength and success of the company's managerial approach has encouraged the Liberal Democrat-controlled council to feel secure with a hands-off policy. That said, increasing financial pressures on the council — mostly arising from the imposition of Welsh Assembly capital and revenue spending restrictions — may force a change of heart, especially as tensions increase between the council and the Labour-led assembly.

David Brown says the company is a keen player in Cardiff's drive to consolidate its position as one of Europe's fastest-growing cities. 'Cardiff Bus is an active contributor to and proponent of the Team Cardiff approach.' He believes that one of the defining characteristics of a successful European city is a modern, efficient, and accessible public transport network.

'Cardiff Bus is committed fully to providing a public transport system fitting for a European capital.' The actual and planned investments in vehicles, staff training, and modernisation are, he underlines, 'not just about financial returns for the company, but equally about benefits that flow to Cardiff from successful capital city status'.

Radical measures required

He has a radical shopping list of measures that are needed in return for the provision of better and busier bus services. 'An essential requirement is the establishment of statutory quality bus partnerships throughout Cardiff,'

he argues. 'There is an urgent need to recognise that some form of rationing mechanism is necessary in road space usage and management.'

Steve Pantak says the council supports the introduction of bus priority measures, but warns that 'these are always controversial'. The council has already attracted considerable local opposition to one such proposal, forcing its withdrawal, but it expects a better reception for the revamped scheme when it is proposed shortly.

The council's planned decriminalisation of parking enforcement and control, either through council wardens or, more likely, by outsourcing to private contractors, is a further key requirement in David Brown's plans. 'Also, we must discourage all-day parking in the spaces available, if we are to make the city more attractive to shoppers and visitors.'

A further pressing need is for citywide park-&-ride facilities, and the council is working tentatively towards the introduction of the first of a potential network of sites around the city perimeter. 'The council recognises the need to provide park-&-ride sites, but cost is a central consideration,' says Steve Pantak.

Bus station needs action

Both David Brown and the council recognise that something must be done soon about the condition and facilities of the present Central bus station. There have been marked improvements recently to the security and safety of the site, with increased surveillance and staffing, but a lot remains to be done. Bus and train operators and the police recognise that the area is one of Cardiff's least attractive features.

David Brown is adamant that the complete rebirth of the Central Square complex as a true European-style transport interchange is a key factor, both in the continued success of Cardiff Bus and in the underpinning of Cardiff as a major European city.

For a variety of reasons, not all commercial, that redevelopment is a political hot potato, although Steve Pantak says the council supports the idea in principle. 'There is a political will to change Central Square and there are good intentions to get behind the area's redevelopment. But there is a lot else going on nearby, particularly the St David's 2 retail schemes.'

Cardiff Bus has achieved its most marked successes in the past decade under, first, Alan Kreppel (who was previously with First Cymru) and, now, David Brown. There's also something else, though, as recently appointed financial director Cynthia Ogbonna highlights. 'Throughout the company, there is a strong ethos that the customer is king. Service is seen as a total package,' she says.

'We can take advantage of every opportunity and our decisions do not have to be based on short-term returns to shareholders. Our goal is to make transport more accessible, and particularly to make public transport a credible alternative to using the private car.'

As she, David Brown and Steve Pantak agree, the key attribute is reliability. 'The search for quality is a continuous journey with no final destination,' recognises the MD, but he yields to no one in his determination to achieve top-level industry status, providing both the travelling public and the company's 730-strong workforce with the best of all possible worlds.

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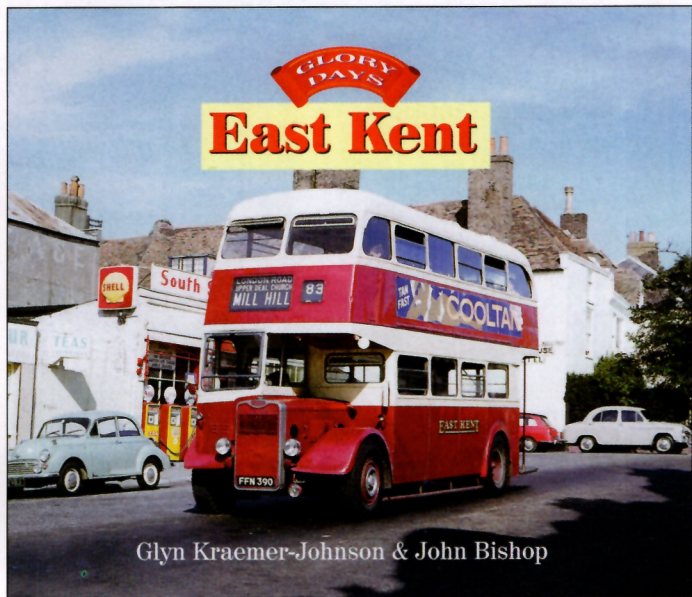
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Glyn Kraemer-Johnson & John Bishop

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2) Which of today's big groups owns East Kent?

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3) What was the model name of East Kent's 30 underfloor-engined Dennis coaches?

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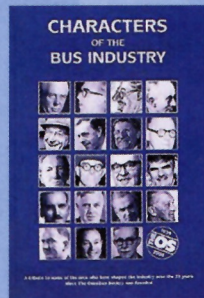
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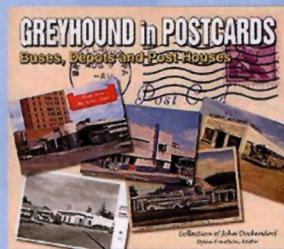
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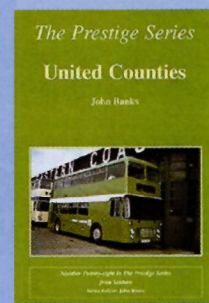
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Emissions: the clean-up continues



With another generation of even lower emission diesels almost upon us, **ALAN MILLAR** explains the background and outlines what may be around the corner

Take it from me. Modern diesel engines — especially when they are properly maintained — are perceptibly cleaner than their predecessors.

Besides the accompanying picture of a far-from-clean Seddon Pennine in Galashiels, one example of bad old diesels sits vividly in my recent memory. It was spring 1995 and my wife and I were sharing a cottage in the Yorkshire Dales with a couple from Norway. We took them for a day in York and, being the public transport-minded citizen that I am, we left the car in a park-&-ride site and caught the bus into the city centre. This may only have been 10 years ago, but it was in the days before there were more than odd handfuls of low-floor buses and FirstGroup had yet to be invented.

York's park-&-ride buses — Willowbrook-bodied ex-National Bus Company Leyland Leopards — were supplied by A. N. Other smaller operator. It wasn't the high floor or the jerky Pneumo-Cyclic transmission that made such an impression on our Nordic friends, but the clouds of smoke billowing from the tailpipes. Our contribution to the environment seemed to be to park the car and ride in a perceptibly more polluting bus.

This was less than two years after the European Union's Euro1 limits had been introduced for new vehicles and about 19 months before the next generation of diesel-engined vehicles would have to comply with the tougher Euro2 limits. Regardless of how well they were maintained, those particular Leopards weren't Euro anything and, since October 2001, manufacturers have been bound by the even stricter Euro3 limits.

Right: The exhaust pipe on the Wright Electrocite hybrid is at roof rather than street level, echoing North American practice.

Above: Lowland Omnibuses 1666 (DSD 958V), a Seddon Pennine 7 with Alexander T-type body, emitting exhaust smoke of historic proportions as it leaves Galashiels bus station in June 1994.

Since 1993, emissions of carbon monoxide (CO) and oxides of nitrogen (NOx) from new engines have come tumbling down. The CO limit has come down from 4.5g/kW/hr on Euro1 engines to 2.1 for Euro3, while the NOx figure has fallen from 8g/kW/hr to five. From October next year, even stricter Euro4 limits will apply and Euro5 limits take effect in October 2009.

The CO limit comes down to 1.5g/kW/hr from next year, while the NOx limit is 3.5 for Euro4 and 2g/kW/hr for Euro5. Be under no illusion that there won't be a Euro6 (maybe with a 0.27NOx limit), Euro7 and more, as engine exhausts are required to do their bit to keep reducing air pollution. The same process will also have cut the limits for potentially carcinogenic diesel exhaust particulates from

0.612g/kW/hr at Euro1 to just 0.02 for Euro4 and Euro5.

Bigger impact on operators

One side effect of the of the impending Euro4 deadline is likely to be a mini-boom in demand for new buses and coaches as operators take advantage of the availability of the last Euro3-engined vehicles. And that is all the more likely as the technical leap to the latest emission limits will involve operators far more on a day-to-day basis than was the case in 1993, 1996 or 2001.

Manufacturers were able to meet the first three European limits by controlling emissions within the engines themselves, but five of Europe's leading diesel engine suppliers — Cummins, Mercedes-Benz, Volvo, Iveco and



DAF — are adopting selective catalytic reduction (SCR) technology for Euro4 and Euro5. Put simply, SCR treats the exhaust through the use of a stainless steel exhaust system incorporating a catalytic converter and by injecting urea into the exhaust.

A reader took me to task recently for describing urea as 'a posh word for ammonia'. Although it can create a similar smell to ammonia when it decomposes, it is a solid rather than a gas, but the issue for bus operators is that it has to be stored separately from diesel fuel. Operators are also more likely to become familiar with it by its brand name of AdBlue.

Typically, Euro4 SCR-engined buses will be equipped with an additional 10litre AdBlue tank with a fill point next to the diesel filler cap. Manufacturers hope to standardise on a single design of filler that, presumably, will have fail-safe dimensions to prevent the wrong liquid being poured into the requisite tanks. One of the critical issues operators will also need to plan around is that AdBlue storage tanks will need to be heated, as their contents crystallise below -5degC.

There also have been suggestions that spilt AdBlue may corrode concrete, which if true is bad news for the many operators whose depot floors are concrete, but in a recent briefing, Dr Teun de Bruijn of GreenChem — one of the AdBlue suppliers — sought to dispel other rumours about this new substance entering operators' lives. 'The facts are that AdBlue is not harmful to the environment. It cannot burn or explode, it can be stored and handled simply and it can even be swallowed, though it's not a very nice taste,' he says.

While that may reassure operators up to a point, Mercedes for one accepts that local bus operators may end up paying marginally more to run their Euro4-engined vehicles. That's because, although diesel consumption on its new engines will be about 6% better, urea will account for about 4 to 6% of total fuel consumption. And at around 51p/litre last

autumn, AdBlue is more expensive than diesel after Bus Service Operator's Grant.

The other downside is an entirely human one. Will depot and driving staff always remember to top up the urea tanks on their vehicles? Will they avoid spilling it if the stories of corroding concrete turn out to be true? The culture of 'get any bus out on service rather than none' suggests the answers to both questions may be 'no'.

All of which explains why several operators are attracted by the direction being taken by two of the other major European manufacturers. MAN and Scania are adopting exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) technology for most of their Euro4 engines. This doesn't require any injection of urea and consequently also leaves no ammonia smell in the exhaust. Scania is confident that it can steer clear of AdBlue on its engines when Euro5 takes effect, although some of its competitors suggest this may be hard to achieve.

Government targets

While all of these rules apply only to new vehicles, there also is a drive going on to clean up older vehicles and possibly apply stricter emission limits within some city centres. The government has set a target of having 600 buses in service with emissions 30% cleaner than Euro3 by 2012.

This helps explain the growing interest in diesel-electric hybrid buses like the Wright Electrocitiy, the Alexander Dennis Enviro200H and the New Zealand-built Designline Olympus being imported by Stagecoach. The Energy Saving Trust has also provided £272,000 towards the development of a hybrid conversion of the Optare Solo, the first example of which operates with First Manchester and has demonstrated key emission reductions of over one third.

Through its TransportEnergy division, the EST also operates a CleanUp programme with grants of up to £6,000 available towards the estimated £10,000 cost of equipping the

likes of a Dennis Dart with either an EGR or SCR exhaust system. It is trying to encourage more operators to apply for these grants before tougher emission limits become mandatory in their areas.

European legislation makes it possible for local authorities to designate low emission zones (LEZ) in order to improve air quality in the most potentially polluted urban areas. They have been a feature of Swedish life for many years and have helped promote the use of alternative bus fuels there like biofuel and gas.

Despite improvements in recent decades, London still has the worst overall air quality in the UK. In July 2003, Mayor Ken Livingstone, the Association of London Government, Transport for London and two government departments published the results of a two-year feasibility study into the introduction of an LEZ for the whole of Greater London.

It concluded that the only practical area it could cover would be that within, but excluding, the M25. Any smaller zone would only increase emissions on adjoining roads as non-compliant vehicles moved out of the area. The study also concluded that the most effective LEZ would cover all buses, coaches and lorries operating within or into the zone. It would initially lay down a minimum standard for all vehicles of Euro2 plus the measures needed to obtain a reduced pollution certificate in order for lorries to qualify for lower vehicle excise duty rates.

At the time, the report suggested that a London LEZ could be designated from the end of 2006. As there has as yet been no word of it being implemented, this is now unlikely to occur before 2009. However, it is notable that The Big Bus Company has been re-equipping its open-top tour buses with low emission Euro3 engines and that TfL is pressing ahead with a trial of six Wright Electrocitiy hybrid buses later this year.

Below: Stagecoach is among the operators already anticipating the introduction of low emission zones and has been taking its first UK-specification Designline Olympus diesel-electric hybrid around Britain. 80009 (VX04 MZG) spent a short period on trial with Stagecoach London on route 276 and was photographed at Stoke Newington on 12 February. RICHARD GODFREY



The politicians' bus?



As ALAN MILLAR explains, First's prototype Wright StreetCar is aimed as much at decision-makers as tomorrow's passengers

FirstGroup unveiled its 'ftr' rail-less rapid transit concept last September, promising to put fleets of tram-styled Wright StreetCar buses into cities prepared to provide sufficient infrastructure — primarily reserved road space — to achieve a significant shift in commuting from cars to public transport.

Back then, we were shown computer-generated images of what these vehicles would look like. And we were provided with the essential technical details of how the Wright Group and Volvo would incorporate the running units of an articulated B7LA into a vehicle built around how real passengers use the real features of real buses. We were promised that the first 18.75m StreetCars would be running in Yorkshire before the end of this year and on 10 March, the prototype was unveiled in a marquee outside the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, south-east London.

As our news report last month showed, the prototype is a faithful execution of the drawings released last autumn. It's a UK equivalent of

the Irisbus Civas or the VDL APTS, with bus technology wrapped in the trappings of a stylish tram with high ceilings and windows, relatively uncluttered floors and a complete separation of driving and fare-collecting duties. However, it draws much more on conventional bus technology than those Continental European vehicles and consequently is substantially cheaper.

Cheaper and quicker to install

Important as the technical details may be, the real story is about politics and perception. We learned on 10 March that 'ftr' — the name is text shorthand for 'future' — apparently was inspired by a conversation between First chief executive Moir Lockhead and transport secretary Alistair Darling about 18 months earlier. Both were wrestling with the seemingly impossible question of how to persuade car commuters to use buses.

That has long been one of First's ambitions and its original 'Barbie bus' concept of pastel-

coloured interiors and extra legroom was conceived to help deliver it. But conventional buses remain a poorly perceived alternative to cars, trains and trams, while the government is reluctant to provide blank cheques for expensive new tram systems or even to extend existing ones. That is why Alistair Darling appears to be so enthusiastic about 'ftr' and the StreetCar.

First argues that it could provide a more frequent 'ftr' service over 7km of route for an eleventh of the cost of a tramway. The increased frequency is partly because StreetCars are smaller than trams — the prototype has only 42 seats — but at £300,000 each, it could provide 15 against 10 twin-car trams for £2 million each. The biggest saving is in track provision as it estimates that a combination of guideways and bus priorities could be provided for £10 million, against £140 million for a tramway.

Moir Lockhead says First could transfer 10% of car journeys on to an 'ftr' system over five to six years, which would increase its revenue on these corridors by 30%.

Besides the lower cost, the other attraction — and the one that may appeal most to politicians — is the speed at which 'ftr' could be installed. Alistair Darling is the fifth transport minister since Labour came to power eight years ago and it's questionable whether he will still be in post if he and his party are re-elected at this year's general election. As he observed, several secretaries of state for transport come and go between the conception and delivery of a major transport project. The same applies at local level, which isn't much of an incentive for vote-hungry politicians with short-term objectives.

That need not be the case with 'ftr', which could be introduced within the lifetime of an



Left: Looking forward in the prototype StreetCar, with its high ceilings and concealed lighting.



Left: The lounge seating area in the rear offside corner. There are similar areas opposite the rear doors and over the nearside rear wheelarch.



Above: The Almex Compact self-service ticket vending machine is in the bulkhead behind the driver's cab.

elected Parliament or local council. The first 12 StreetCars are still expected in service in York later this year, replacing 12m single-deckers on cross-city service 4. Leeds and Sheffield remain likely locations for further investments — Leeds seems farther ahead than Sheffield — while Swansea, Bath, Reading and Glasgow have also expressed strong interest.

On 10 March, Strathclyde Passenger Transport chair Alistair Watson — a railwayman at heart — was talking enthusiastically about the concept, telling First Glasgow's Eric Stewart: 'We need to get some of these buses in Glasgow.' He believes they could be the key to providing a rapid transit link through the city's up-and-coming harbour redevelopment area along a former railway trackbed on which SPT originally hoped to run trams.

The technical differences

Beneath the sexy exterior, there isn't a huge difference between a StreetCar and a conventional B7LA. It has a shorter front overhang, with the driving position relocated over the front axle and extra length is added into the wheelbase to provide a greater low-floor area for passengers.

It also has a longer rear overhang than other UK B7LAs, but the more noticeable change at that end is the removal of the 'shower cabinet' or 'toilet compartment' effect around the nearside engine bay. First wanted this area opened up to more daylight and Volvo and Wright have relocated the radiator from directly above the engine to the centre of the rear roof dome. Instead of having a conventional

mechanical fan belt system, cooling is by hydraulic drive.

The result is a far more civilised layout, without the cramped and claustrophobic arrangement around the rearmost seats — a dog's dinner that greatly diminished the B7L's appeal in the UK. In theory, Wrightbus and Volvo could offer a similar set-up on conventionally bodied B7Ls, but this is unlikely to happen before the Euro4-compliant B9L family replaces this model range. Indeed, the engine compartment on the StreetCar has been designed to accommodate the slightly larger 9litre engine.

The Wright Group is interested in adapting the StreetCar to use the hybrid diesel-electric technology of its near zero-emission Electrocity midibus, although this isn't as simple as it may first appear. Electrocity works best on stop/start journeys where frequent braking helps charge the traction batteries. If 'ftr' lives up to its promise, StreetCars will run farther and faster between stops and might require other means of generating their electric power.

More space, fewer seats

The prototype has two plug doorways, an entrance (and wheelchair ramp) directly behind the front axle and an exit at the front of the rear section. An Almex Compact self-service ticket vending machine behind the driver's cab bulkhead will sell individual journey tickets and read smartcards. It uses touch screen technology and rapid coin validation to speed the ticket issuing process, which has no driver involvement.

Although structurally similar to its existing bus body range, Wrightbus has fitted out the StreetCar to be much more like a tram, with high ceilings, a mix of up and down-lighting and a heating, ventilation and air conditioning system that removes the need for opening

windows. That last feature may also eliminate one of the sources of rattles and draughts that diminish the enjoyment of riding in many of today's conventional buses. A new design of cantrail extrusion accommodates the deeper windows.

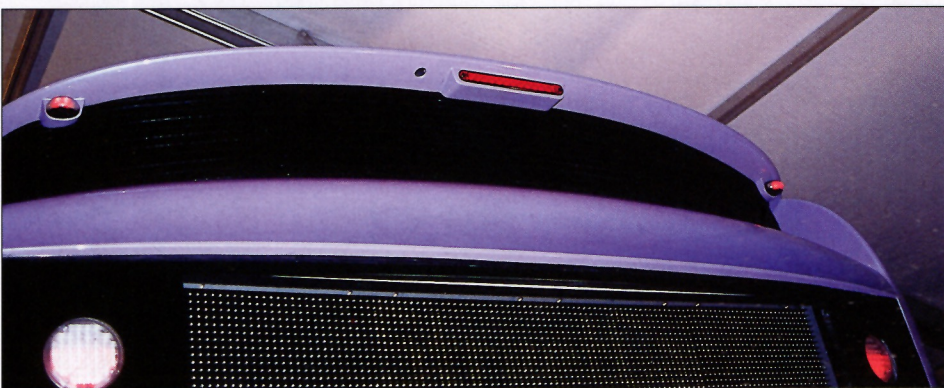
First's market research showed that wheelarches — especially at the front — are among the least appreciated features on low-floor buses. The throat area between the front wheels is a major bottleneck and the wheelarches themselves are used more often to deposit children than to store shopping or luggage. The redesigned front end of the StreetCar eliminates that problem and provides wheelchair and priority seat users with quicker access to their appointed places — just as on an Optare Solo midibus.

There are back-to-back seats over the middle wheels, while the rearmost wheelarches are hidden beneath two of the three lounge areas of inward-facing seats in the back section. Some of these are corner seats, giving passengers the choice of facing inwards, forwards or backwards and providing some of the personal space most of us prefer when riding on public transport.

The downside of personal space provision is that fewer persons can be accommodated within it than on a conventional maximum seated bus. While First's promotional video shows glamorous young things stretching their legs and enjoying a StreetCar ride through York, the reality might be that those outstretched limbs become entangled with those of the 60-plus standees on a busy journey.

That may be less of an issue in a small city like York and need not happen elsewhere if 15 StreetCars are provided instead of 10 higher capacity trams. Another possibility — to which First and Wrightbus are already alive — would be to build a 24m three-section StreetCar with more seats and standing room. That might not work everywhere, but could still be a viable alternative to a conventional tram where track space and bus stop infrastructure is provided.

The seating layout on the prototype benefits from the absence of an emergency exit door, a feature that isn't required on articulated buses. Eagle-eyed readers may also have spotted that there isn't a driver's signalling window either, but that was only a temporary omission to meet the tight deadline of the ministerial launch.



Right: The radiator is relocated above the rear window, allowing all-round glazing over the nearside engine compartment.

Picturereview

The Magic of Mayo

With these photographs taken in March in Co. Mayo, **EAMON McARTHUR** provides an insight into the rural nature of the later lives of much of the Bus Éireann fleet. Known to many as 'hedgerow buses', even though they are allocated to 'home' garages many can be found along the highways and byways of rural Ireland, up the sides of mountains, down bohreens, in farmyards and at the sides of houses.



Above: Although allocated to Broadstone garage in Dublin, Irizar Century-bodied Scania SC2 (01 D 27575) had worked into Ballina on the early morning service from Dublin. This service carries cross-channel passengers from England. Here, the coach waits outside Ballina garage, on the N59 trunk road, awaiting the return to Dublin in the afternoon.



Left: Parked at the side of the road at a typical farmyard gate is Leyland Tiger/Alexander TE-type schoolbus TE29 (89 D 21529). It is allocated to Ballina, but based at Westport Quay sub-depot and outstationed at Newport on the way to Achill Island. When new, it was allocated to Expressway front line work at Broadstone, before being transferred to Westport to cover a summer only midday service to Dublin with a return at 19.00.

Top right: Leyland Lynx LS145 (90 D 55797) was previously Travel West Midlands 1203 (G203 EOG) and is on the Ballina allocation. Although classed officially as a schoolbus, it is out-based at Carracastle, near Charlestown to operate the shuttle service between Knock Airport and Charlestown, where it makes 37 connections a day with express services to Dublin, Sligo, Galway and Athlone. This picture was taken at the main terminal at Knock Airport. It is expected to be replaced shortly by one of Bus Éireann's recently acquired ex-Go North East Optare Excels. Its regular weekday driver is also a publican who parks the bus overnight in his public house car park; at weekends, a schoolbus driver takes over.



Right: PD44 (92 D 10044) — outstationed from Ballina and Westport Quay to Louisburgh — is the last Plaxton Paramount-bodied DAF MB230 still operating stage carriage work. The others are schoolbuses that also work weekend relief duties. The 'Mayo is Magic' logos are for its extra duties on day tours from Westport, where it was photographed after worked a midday journey from Louisburgh.



Below: GAC Rural Bus KS67 (EZV 67) is allocated to Ballina but outstationed at Kilalla tourist office. This Irish-built bus started life as KR67 and worked at Ballina and Sligo before being downgraded to schoolbus duties. It is fitted with a Wayfarer ticket machine and works some local services and reliefs in from Ballycastle.





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1237. A tribute to Southdown's Queen Marys. UK. Buses. John Bishop's popular cine of the 1996 Pool Valley PD3s plus the gathering and 21st C Worthing.
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1259. Hustle 'Bus'tle Hastings. UK. Buses. The Hastings bus scene in an hectic era. Starts old livery 1972 then NBC through privatisation, Topline H&D to 2002.

1260. Belfast. Northern Ireland. UK. Buses. The new 'Metro' branding with pink colour scheme, all change yet again, lots of deckers few in old red or blue livery.

1261. A Decade in Waterford. Ireland. Buses. A look at buses operating in Waterford city with all visits included between 1994 and 2004 includes independents.

1262. Retro Compendium. Italian Trolleybuses in the 1990s. Featuring Milan, San Remo, Naples and Parma. A very interesting trolley era re-visited.



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The Fenton File

MIKE FENTON reminds us of the flop that was the Marshall Minibus

Few words are needed to express operators' feelings towards the Marshall Minibus. Unpleasant, unreliable and unwanted usually suffice. Cambridge-based Marshall Specialist Vehicles built around 50 on part of the city's airport and, in theory, the Minibus should have provided decent competition for the Dennis Dart, but things did not turn out that way.

My first attempted encounter with one came in May 1997 when I was expecting one of four owned by Glossopdale of Glossop to appear. It didn't because it had broken down. I should have known better as they had already acquired a poor reputation, but a few weeks later I did find one running and took a ride.

The on-board vibration and the racket from the back of the bus were unbelievable and even the least knowledgeable individual must have realised this was not a good bus.

To illustrate the type, I have chosen P405 KAV from

Blackburn-based Buzy Buz, which I photographed outside Blackburn railway station in August 2003. It was new in January 1997 as London General ML15. It seemed quite fitting that the driver was as bad tempered as his bus

when he spent a good 5min complaining about how his human rights had been violated by my photography.

At least he would not have had to put up with that particular problem for too much longer as his employer suddenly ceased trading towards the end of November that year.



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Reviews

BOOKS

TRAMS, TROLLEYBUSES AND BUSES AND THE LAW

MICHAEL YELTON, published by ADAM GORDON, ISBN 1 87442251 6, 250MM x 175MM, 108pp SOFTBACK, £15 (available direct from the publisher at Kinttradwell Farmhouse, Brora, Sutherland, KW9 6LU)

Readers may recall an article that Michael Yelton wrote for *Buses* in March 2000 on an epic bus journey he made from Land's End to John O'Groats. Besides a 45-year interest in buses, trams and trolleybuses, he is a Cambridge-educated barrister and for the past seven years has been a circuit judge in the east of England. In this book, he has applied his professional knowledge to his pastime.

Unlike the vast majority of bus books, this one isn't about Leylands, Bristols, Crossleys or Daimlers, but it is a legal history of the street public transport industry from the 1870s until 1985, when Nicholas Ridley's Transport Act ushered in deregulation. The only pictures of actual vehicles are those of the London tram, Portsmouth trolleybus and Manchester Crossley bus on the cover.

However, if you want to get a better understanding of how legislation shaped the way our buses, trams and trolleybuses operated and of some of the landmark legal cases that occurred along the way, then this book will tell you a lot. The author half apologises for resorting to some of the legal world's shorthand of clauses, sections, Appeal Cases and the like, but for all that it is still a highly accessible account of the public transport story from a lawyer's perspective.

He explains, for example, about the formation and eventual dissolution of statutory companies like Gosport & Fareham, Cheltenham District and Mansfield District, as well as the complex story of why none of the West Monmouthshire Omnibus Board passed to Rhymney Valley Council in 1974, even though some wards of Bedwellty Urban District (which part-owned West Mon) did.

Similarly enlightening is his explanation of the legislation governing trolleybuses. Operators required Parliamentary powers to run them, but like tramways were largely exempt from control by the traffic commissioners. He hints that Reading, and maybe other towns and cities, were at least partly persuaded to run trolleybuses rather than motorbuses because they could be masters in their own houses.

Other chapters deal with the railways' interest in and influence over bus operation, and the separate sets of legislation that applied in London. Even if you are familiar with the overall story, his perspective sets it in a different context, and he uses some enlightening case reports to show how the courts interpreted the detailed points of the

various Acts of Parliament. These include actions by Midland Red in Leicester and by private operators in Leeds to try to prevent those cities' municipal operations from expanding. Another was a lengthy landmark case of 1948-50 that eventually reached the House of Lords over London Transport's plans to operate a regular route in rural Hertfordshire over territory already served by a small operator on market days.

And there is much evidence of the sometimes incredibly heavy-handed regulation that maybe hastened Mr Ridley's controversial legislation. One tells how in 1961, shortly after the entertainer George Formby had died, Standerwick and another coach operator lost their appeal against a conviction of allowing their drivers to divert off the licensed route of a tour to pass the late Mr Formby's house. Ten years later, the House of Lords found that a dock worker had infringed the hire or reward legislation by accepting cash or beer in exchange for giving his colleagues regular lifts to and from work in his car.

CHESTERFIELD TROLLEYBUSES

BARRY M. MARSDEN, MIDDLETON PRESS, ISBN 1 904474 519 235MM x 165MM, 96pp SOFTBACK, £14.95

This 13th in Middleton Press's *Trolleybus Classics* series also is Barry Marsden's second by the same title. Tempus Publishing produced his earlier work on this short-lived system in 2002 and there is

some inevitable overlap between the two. But while the first was largely the story with a modest number of pictures, this is largely a book of pictures laced with well-chosen words.

Indeed, given that Chesterfield's trolleybuses ran only between 1927 and 1938, it's hard to imagine that any photographs remain unpublished of them posed, in service or lined up waiting to be scrapped. Most of the pictures are presented in geographical order, sandwiched between those chronicling the opening and closure of the system.

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As part of the celebrations of the Midland Red centenary, David Hale has reissued his typically well produced video of the commemoration of the last days of the company's D9 double-deckers as a DVD with extra features.

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It's about 15min longer than the original VHS production, with expanded silent versions of some of the Super 8 ciné footage of D9s in the 1960s and 1970s that also appears in the main programme. There's also a short additional item showing open-top OM2 of Obsolete Fleet negotiating Trafalgar Square

when it was part of the small D9 fleet on the Round London Sightseeing Tour. While D9s are the main subjects of the archive footage, they have wider bus appeal with the likes of Midland Red's D7s and predominantly maroon Leicester AECs and Leylands in the 1960s, Leyland Nationals and predominantly cream Metro-Scania and Dennis Dominators in the 1970s. It's also a reminder of when the cars sharing road space with those buses were largely British made.

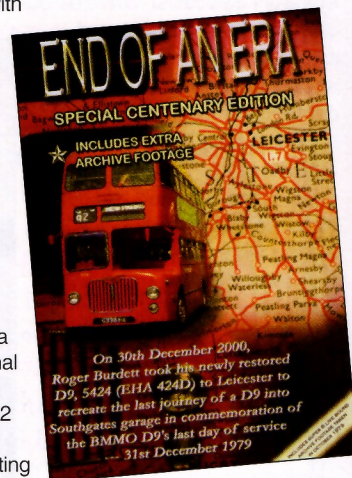
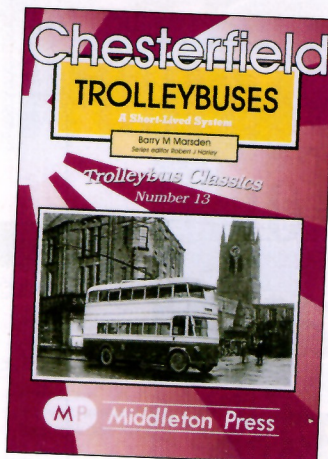
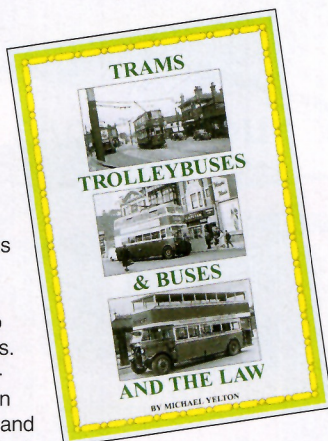
As I said when reviewing the VHS version in September 2001, the archive film isn't just a series of street scenes but also includes sequences in Leicester housing estates and of D9 interiors with real passengers and real conductors. Much of the commentary is made up of a series of interviews about the impact that the D9s had upon staff and passengers, with recollections of such features as their 'pink lights' at night. Some of the closing sequences reveal that it wasn't so much the lights as the buses' ceilings that had that rosy glow.

The other star of the film is Roger Burdett's then newly restored D9 5424, which took enthusiasts on a trip from Birmingham to Leicester on 30 December 2000 to commemorate the end of D9 operation on 31 December 1979. As he explains in early sequences, this bus had been through a far-from-superficial restoration. Virtually every mechanical and structural part had been replaced or repaired over a 20-month period, almost certainly putting it in better order than it had ever been when first built. Following the death of its original engine, a replacement had been fabricated out of two others and much else had been changed.

Having expended that much effort in putting this 1966 bus back into shape, he can afford to criticise the engineers who built it. Yes, he says Midland Red indulged in some highly innovative engineering, but the quality of its manufacturing left much to be desired.

This is a professionally made film, well edited and filmed. Indeed, the credits show no fewer than five cameramen helped capture the scenes of 5424.

Reviews by **ALAN MILLAR**



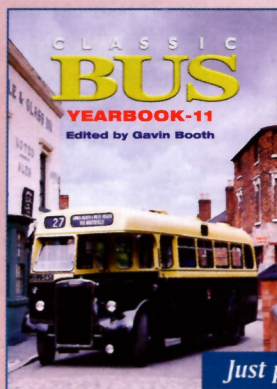
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Published April

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K McCormack
ISBN: 0 7110 3073 1 HB
184mm x 240mm 80pp
£14.99

In over 80, mostly unpublished, colour illustrations, the author explores London Transport's surface and underground operations in these momentous years which saw the withdrawal of the trams and trolleybuses, the introduction of the Routemaster and the opening of the Victoria line, among many other topics.



Just published

CLASSIC BUS YEARBOOK 11
Edited by Gavin Booth
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Many road transport enthusiasts look forward eagerly each Spring to the publication of the latest edition of this popular annual excursion into the world of the half-cab bus.

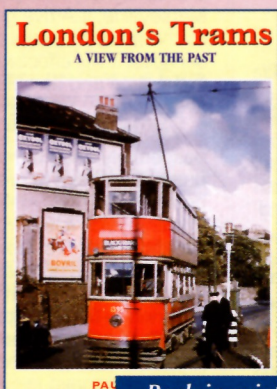
The new edition contains, as always, a wealth of fascinating articles and features and is packed with nostalgic photographs.



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GLORY DAYS: EAST KENT
Glyn Kraemer-Johnson & John Bishop
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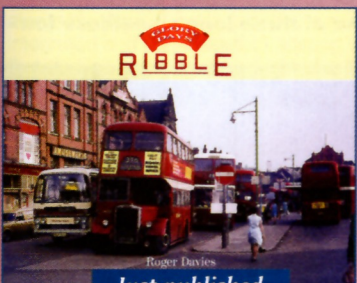
The book provides a detailed narrative of the company's history, operations and vehicles, from its formation in 1916 through to its becoming part of the National Bus Company in the late 1960s. Like the other titles in the successful 'Glory Days' series, it is illustrated with colour and black & white photographs throughout.



Back in print

LONDON'S TRAMS: A VIEW FROM THE PAST
Paul Collins
ISBN: 0 7110 2741 2 HB
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This book features all the tramways inherited by the London Transport Passenger Board in 1933 in a fascinating collection of over 150 black & white photographs which recall many different aspects of London's tramway history including the change pits, service vehicles, the Kingsway Subway and much else.



Just published

GLORY DAYS: RIBBLE
R Davies
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This is a comprehensive account of a fondly remembered company, its operations and vehicles, over a near 60-year period from its earliest days through to its amalgamation into the NBC in the 1970s.

The book includes many reminiscences from former Ribble staff and is illustrated with many colour and mono illustrations and a range of memorabilia from Ribble's golden years.

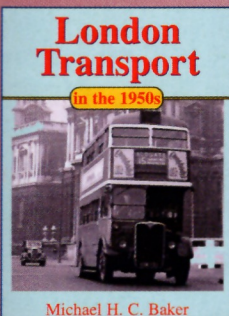


Just published

BUSES RESTORED 2005 NARTM
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235mm x 172mm 128pp £13.99

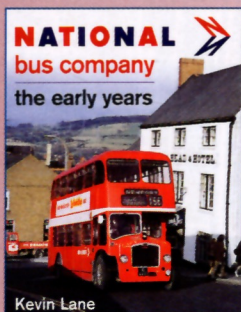
Compiled by the National Association of Road Transport Museums, this is the definitive annual guide to the many road transport museums throughout the British Isles. New features of the completely revised 2005 edition are colour photographs throughout for the first time and a more comprehensive list of vehicles preserved, but not in collections, produced in conjunction with the British Bus Preservation Group.

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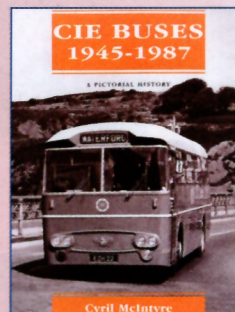
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YOU WRITE

Why Edinburgh rejected C-charge

In response to the letter from Alistair Taylor of Andover (You Write last month), I wish to comment as a resident of Edinburgh who voted 'no' to the proposed congestion charge. There were many reasons.

The council and the Scottish Parliament were told that tolls couldn't be introduced until an alternative system was up and running. The council wanted two cordons, an outer and an inner. No chance. They wanted to charge the east side but not the west. The whole thing was a shambles.

Mr Taylor talks about the Fastlink guided busway. This is the biggest white elephant of all and a waste of money. It doesn't save time. If the council had reopened the disused suburban rail tracks, built underground car parks and built park-&-rides and had a system similar to either York or the Metro in Singapore, then it would have got its tolls. An authority cannot charge for something that doesn't exist.

Christopher J. R. Fentiman
Edinburgh

Apathy on the buses

With bus ridership dwindling generally and rail passenger numbers increasing, it is surely right that taxpayers should be sceptical about millions of pounds of public money being put into schemes that they think operators may fritter away. Fortunately, more optimistic reports about bus use in the area may do something to allay such fears in the case of the proposed Cambridge guided busway.

Why is bus ridership dwindling? Correspondence in recent editions of *Buses* affords some useful clues.

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Arriva's plan has strings attached

I read with interest the item on Arriva's plans for Merseyside in last month's *Buses*. From what I read, anybody living outside the area could be forgiven for believing that Arriva has been the salvation of all bus users on Merseyside — such was the positive spin given to the words of Bob Hind on the proposal to invest £45 million on 400 new buses.

The reality is different. Arriva's true commitment to Merseyside so far has been very disappointing. This can best be gauged by comparing the fleet replacement programme of the 'ailing' Merseybus/MTL North with that of Arriva since acquiring it in 2000.

Between 1994 and 2000, MTL bought around 380 new buses including 58 double-deckers and over 150 low-floor single-deckers. Since its acquisition, Arriva has transferred many of the low-floor examples to depots out of the area and brought in older step-entrance replacements.

In comparison, Arriva's purchases for the seven Merseyside depots have been woeful and Bob Hind's assertion that Arriva has bought 250 new buses is misleading. This figure is the total for the whole of his operating area (North West

and Wales). A more accurate number of new buses for Merseyside is 156 single-deckers, all but a handful of which are S or Y (2000/01)-registered. The only recent new deliveries are nine Wright Cadet-bodied VDL SB120s for the 89 (St Helens-Liverpool Airport) service part-financed by European funding.

As the report states correctly, Arriva's offer is conditional and is a direct response to Merseytravel's campaign to take back full control of the area's bus services. Very few would argue that deregulation has been an unmitigated disaster and Merseyside has suffered more than most when it comes to declining services, increased fares and an ageing fleet.

At the moment, Arriva's provision of evening commercial services in the whole of north Liverpool, with a population of 150,000, consists of just two routes. As there is no Stagecoach and barely any First presence within Merseyside, if Arriva gets its way by being able to charge commercial fares on its tendered services, it will effectively establish a monopoly in the area and be able to hold its passengers to ransom.

Yes, Liverpool and Merseyside do desperately need a massive influx of modern buses if they are to present themselves in the best light in 2008. At the moment, Arriva's fleet in Merseyside is a veritable dog's dinner of non-standard cast-offs. However, I do believe there are too many strings attached to Arriva's conditional offer and I fear that the area will continue to be a dumping ground for buses well past their sell-by date.

Brian G. Madden
Liverpool

Below: Among the more unusual buses that Arriva inherited from MTL North is 0602 (M302 YBG), one of three long wheelbase low-floor Neoplan N4009s. **PAUL GODDING**



East Suffolk is lucky in having a pair of voluntary organisations that each represent the interests of both bus and rail passengers and have been instrumental in pulling together a number of integrated transport schemes. Dialogue with rail managers is routine. That's not to say that passenger groups get it all their own way, but they get a fair hearing, honest answers and are never called liars.

If a bus manager puts his head above the parapet, it means he's either already got his bag packed or someone else is going to pack it for him. Rail operators get useful feedback and a lot of free, positive publicity via the groups. The dissatisfied bus passenger tends to take it out of the already overworked and underpaid driver and there is no one else around to take the flak.

A rail passenger group in the adjoining county spawned the Bittern Line Community Rail Partnership by getting together all the stakeholders in North Norfolk. This took years of hard, dedicated voluntary work but has resulted in more integration and the transformation of a basket case railway line into a thriving modern line with a startling 142% increase in use. This is a boost to the local economy, and more cars off the road should also have benefited the bus operators in terms of less traffic congestion.

Following this success, a similar partnership was launched recently in East Suffolk, anticipating equal or even greater gains.

Rail and bus operators are both in competition with the private car. Get people out of their cars and we will all be winners. Okay, we all know that, but what are we doing about it? Rail passenger groups abound throughout the UK. They may seem like Thomas the Tank Engine freaks to Mr Jack (You Write last month), but they work tirelessly, argue rationally and when necessary lobby everyone from parish councillors to peers of the realm. They do help the cause, but it takes organisation, research, professionalism and the ability to see the other side of the coin. You don't force public enquiries with mere rabidity.

Bus passenger groups should be working alongside them in order to encourage a truly integrated and non-wasteful transport system that doesn't appear to be weighted in favour of rail, but are they?

R. A. Flower
Thurston, Bury St Edmunds

Where's the loose change, mate?

Julian Osborne (Service Extra, December) mentioned a First driver who said he could not change a £10 note for a £3 fare. I can go better than that.

On a Sunday afternoon last August, I went to a steam rally in West Sussex and afterwards waited for a 63 bus operated by Arriva Southern Counties. The bus came on time, but when I boarded it and asked for my destination, the fare was £2.60 and I gave the driver a £5 note. He said that he had only just started and could not change that. As I did not have enough coins to make up £2.60, I had to get off and let the bus go without me.

I was only going for the trip, so all I missed out on was a pleasant trip through the Sussex countryside, but what if I really needed to make that journey? Would I have to fork out for a taxi or would I have to walk half a mile to the nearest shop to get change and then wait the remainder of the two hours for the bus to return? Walking would not be an option, however fit you were, because the A281 is a busy road with no pavements on either side for much of its length.

Do Arriva buses leave their depots with no float at all? That would mean that the first three or four passengers would have to have the exact fare on them and if you were expected to have

that, then 'Please tender exact fare' should be written on the front of the bus.

You would not expect to go into a newsagent's in the early morning to buy a paper only to have the man behind the counter say: 'No, I can't change that, mate'.

The only other complaint I have about any bus trip in the whole year was also an Arriva bus, this time in Gravesend. I waited 15min for a 136 bus and when it came I and a couple of other people put our arms out to stop it, but it just drove by. It was only half full. Being a stranger to Gravesend, I used up the half hour until the next one was due by walking into the town to catch that bus from the main stop, just in case it was not supposed to stop there — even though there was a timetable for it on the bus shelter.

When I boarded the next 136, it went round to the original stop where I had waited and picked up two passengers there. And this time I did need to catch the bus.

D. Smith
Hove

Walking on water

I read Julian Osborne's comments (Service Extra last month) with interest, especially his reference to Traveline. I tried Traveline's website recently, just to see how it was doing.

Last time I'd used it I had tried to get from Shepperton to Warwick, when it had come up with the ingenious solution of going by bus to Hatton and changing there on to a train. Trouble was the Hatton at which one got off the bus was in Middlesex, the railway station in Warwickshire.

This time it gave me two options. Start by walking from Shepperton to Weybridge to get the bus, or by walking to Thorpe Park. In both cases, the walk time was given as just over a quarter of an hour, which surprised me a little. But then I hadn't thought of the walking routes it proceeded to show me on nice little maps. That to Weybridge involved walking unaided straight across two flooded gravel pits, a creek and the River Thames, and that to Thorpe Park also involved crossing the Thames, also without the aid of a bridge.

Looked at that way, they are surprisingly short walks, though I can think of only one person who might ever have achieved it. Buses hadn't been invented then.

Stephen Morris
Shepperton, Middlesex

Does TfL care about the Metroline 186?

I was fascinated to read in February 'In London' that Transport for London/London Buses is taking a greater interest in the performance of companies operating tendered services. Sadly, this interest has come too late for those of us who have to use route 186 between Northwick Park Hospital and Edgware/Brent Cross, as I note that the new contract from July has been reawarded to Metroline Travel.

Much is made in the columns of *Buses* about how bus services in many parts of Britain have suffered over recent years in comparison with London, and this is true for the most part. I use the buses extensively all over London so as to visit various properties and I extol their virtues to office colleagues. After making me suffer some derision at first, several colleagues now admit how useful these service are, particularly in central London.

However, the story of the suburban 186 is completely different. This service has been consistently appalling for the past 10 years. I

suppose we should have considered ourselves fortunate that our local route was one of four guinea pig low-floor routes, but the LLW-class of Wright-bodied Dennis Lance single-deckers has never been sufficient for the service requirements, mainly for reasons of capacity.

These vehicles are much worse now, despite the original 'plank' seats having been replaced by ones with a nano-centimetre of moquette and some of the vehicles having enjoyed a repaint. I suggest that TfL's gurus and Metroline's management should travel on one of these Wright's wrecks along Edgwarebury Lane in Edgware or Locket Road in Wealdstone where they — like regular passengers — will wonder how they do not fall apart, such is the cacophony of rattles and bangs that they dissipate.

The good news, though, is that the tender award from July specifies double-deckers. For some time, there has been local bafflement as to how tin-pot routes like the H12 get new (VP-class) double-deckers and the 204 enjoys (VPL) long double-deckers, whereas the trunk route 186 has put up with the single-deck LLWs. I did once see as many as 12 people recently on an H12.

The 186 used to be a 10min interval service — every 20min to Brent Cross interlaced with every 20min to Edgware. The timetable used to show this until the recent unfortunate dumbering down exercise whereby TfL/London Buses thinks that membership of Mensa is a pre-requisite to finding out when your bus runs. Now the displays show 'about every 8 to 12min'. Regular users wish it were so.

Metroline manages to run 186s in convoy even before 07.30. In fact, this is the main — and consistent — problem. It is usual to wait 20 or even 30min for a 186 and then find two or three buses running almost together. As I say, this has been a consistent problem for at least the past 10 years. Last night (31 January) in the rush hour, I waited 20min for a 186; when it arrived, I couldn't board it as it was full. The next one was 10min thereafter and I just squeezed on. The next one was 1min after that, and the next 1min behind that. This is not an isolated incident but a norm.

My final moan about this route concerns the standard of driving, which again is consistently worse taken as a whole than any other route on which I travel. Owing to the inconsistency of service, often full standing loads are carried and, with one or two exceptions, the drivers act like boy racers at the wheel of their own car with consequent obvious passenger discomfort, if not danger.

I have witnessed 186 drivers, carrying a standing load, stamp hard on the brakes to allow cars to back out of driveways in front of the bus when it would have been easier to continue moving steadily. Courtesy to other road users, yes, courtesy and safety to their passengers, an emphatic no.

From time to time, I see London United road staff regulating their services and I feel such envy. I am convinced that Metroline management does not check anything to do with the 186 service, neither regulation nor driving standards, and I am compelled to draw the conclusion — with the renewal of the contract to Metroline — that neither does TfL.

Perhaps TfL's new approach can start with this underperforming route. Or will we have to wait until the contract is due for the next renewal in several years' time?

John Schofield
Stanmore, Middlesex

Rattling good buses?

I have read with interest some of the recent letters containing criticism of how much some

modern bus bodies rattle. I am also amazed just how much some modern bus and in some cases coach bodies rattle and creak. What on earth would they be like if all chassis were fitted with leaf spring suspension?

However, in my experience there is one manufacturer of coach bodywork that possibly sets the benchmark for rattle-free construction. That is Van Hool. Several months ago, I travelled on a nine-year-old DAF MB230 with Van Hool Alizée T8 coachwork and there was not a rattle or creak to be heard anywhere. Similarly, over the years I have travelled on and driven several examples of the same superb T8 Alizée body mounted on the equally superb Volvo B10M chassis and the rattle-free experience was just the same.

Even the much-hallowed Kässbohrer Setra S250 Special coaches that I travel on from time to time are not totally rattle-free. With regard to bus bodies, I think they are all much the same in the rattle stakes.

While it is generally accepted that many areas of psv design have come a long way, there are still some aspects that concern me. Why, for instance, are coach engines getting bigger and bus engines smaller? These small units may push out impressive horsepower figures, but usually maximum torque is achieved at fairly high revolutions, resulting in higher fuel consumption and possibly shorter engine life.

In a nutshell, I firmly believe that despite all the modern electronic technology, there is still no substitute for cubic capacity. Maybe the secrets of producing an engine that offers high torque at low revs disappeared with the demise of L. Gardner and Sons Ltd.

The benefits of low-floor buses are well documented, but is a vehicle that offers such a low comparative seating capacity a good way of getting people out of their cars? I think not. As for articulated buses, their benefits do not even begin to stare me in the face.

Finally, for anyone who has never experienced a rattle-free journey on a service bus, may I recommend that they try a Routemaster before it's too late?

David Penlington
Uttuxeter

Best engine ever?

Alan Townsin (March *Buses*) is right, I believe, in drawing attention to the outstanding contribution that the Leyland O.600 engine has made to the history of our public transport. Yes, it was good, but was it really the best?

Regarding efficiency, in terms of nominal horsepower per litre it was bettered slightly by the AEC 9.6litre, and even more so by the Gardner 5LW and 6LW. The governed speed of the Gardners was 1,700rpm, at which the 5LW was rated at 94hp and the 6LW at 112hp. The figures were a little lower before the 'K' modification was introduced about 1950. The governed speed of both the Leyland O.600 and the AEC 9.6litre was usually stated to be 1,800rpm, at which both were rated at 125hp.

Levelling the field for the Gardners, at 1,700rpm the other two would probably have produced, say, 120hp. On that assumed basis, the hp/litre figures would then come out as 13.43 in the case of the 5LW, 13.33 for the 6LW, 12.5 for the AEC and 12.24 for the Leyland.

A bus needs to be no more powerful than necessary for it to carry its maximum load at scheduled speed, perhaps with a little bit in reserve for use when reasonably required. Any bus capable of doing more than that is, as the redoubtable Norman Morton once put it, 'over-engineered', and he couldn't understand why some operators allowed their buses to fall into that category. He believed that an engine was required only to fulfil its function reliably and at relatively low cost.

Alan refers to the Warrington O.600s, quoting their admirable mileage before overhaul. Two questions arise here. First, much of Warrington is fairly flat, so were those engines derated? Second, how did the O.600s compare with the 6LWs in Warrington's Guys, Bristols and Fodens? Does anyone know?

I have seen it suggested that a large engine moderately worked could be more economical than a smaller engine heavily worked. This may be the case on rural and inter-urban services, where buses cover a great proportion of mileage in the highest gear. Norman Morton did not find it so in his Sunderland Corporation fleet, with all-urban operation, for notwithstanding the 6LW's greater mileage between overhauls, he found that the 5LW on account of its superior fuel economy was overall the cheaper and more efficient engine to operate.

David Wayman
Chadderton, Oldham

When truth is stranger than fiction

I enjoyed your April Fool joke last month about green being the new red. However, truth is stranger than fiction. The Yellow Coach in the photo below is white. It was operating a shuttle service between the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum in Washington, DC, and its new facility at Washington Dulles Airport when I photographed it on 10 October 2004.

Laurence Bindley
Larne, Co Antrim

As Byron said

Lord Byron it was who said 'Tis strange but true, for truth is always strange. Stranger than fiction'. And so the April Fool spoof 'Ken's articulated icon' in last month's *Buses* is the fiction to at least two strange truths, to my knowledge.

The first example was produced, I think, in the late-1970s by the Kässbohrer company of Ulm in Germany as part of its Setra S200 range. I saw photographs of a development vehicle in one of its promotional magazines many years ago, but that is no longer available to me and I do not know of any further examples.

Second, a vehicle I did get to see perhaps 10 years ago was a similar coach of Dutch manufacture being used to carry tourists just outside Amsterdam. I think it had Berkhof bodywork and was in a maroon and black livery of the national railway-owned fleet, with three

staircases (conventional!) and passage through the articulation only on the upper deck as the engine was at the rear of the front section.

Regrettably I am unable to provide further details. Maybe other readers can fill in the gaps and maybe even add to the fleet.

Howard Piltz, CMLT
Wilmslow, Cheshire

Not appreciated

If I wanted to read rubbish, rather than buying a top-price Ian Allan magazine, I would choose a child's comic. The reason for my comment is that p37 of the April issue of *Buses* is obviously written as an April Fool's 'joke'. I grew out of that stage about 49 years ago when I was eight years old. With such childishness, it's little wonder that people who are not into our hobby treat us as 'anoraks' when so many bus enthusiasts portray that sort of image.

John S. Lewis
Liverpool

The real April Fool?

Many thanks for the as usual splendid April *Buses*. I was amused by the rather inventive and tasteful April Fool spoof on p37, even to the '1 April 2005' date. A little light relief is always welcome.

I wonder, though, how many readers found some of your more obscure and concealed spoofs. For example, referring to the Trent Barton Tempos on p10, paragraph five as Excel 2s, and testing us out by quoting the registration of the ex-North Western Leopard on p20 as VBD 915. That registration would feel more at home in United Counties territory, whereas VDB 915 could be seen in its halcyon days in the Stockport area.

Keith W. Thompson
Neston, Cheshire

Is this the Wright howler?

To the three April Fool howlers (p37 last month) should undoubtedly be added the Wright StreetCar. For my money, it looks even more completely ridiculous in the metal than as a scale drawing.

Tim Hall
London, SW15

Is white the new yellow?: The confusingly liveried Mexican-built Dina Viaggio with Marcopolo body in Washington DC. LAURENCE BINDLEY



A red double-decker bus is shown from a front-three-quarter view. The destination sign above the windshield reads '13 Aldwych'. A large advertisement on the side of the bus reads 'A MUSICAL TRULY FOR OUR TIME'. The bus has the license plate 'ALD 933B'. A traffic light is visible in the foreground on the right.



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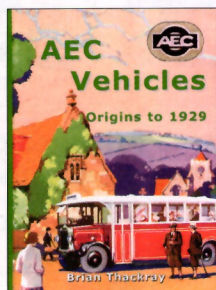
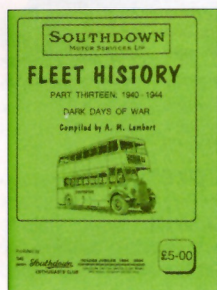
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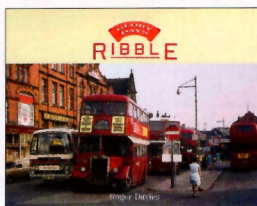
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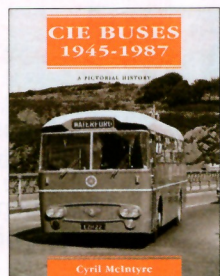
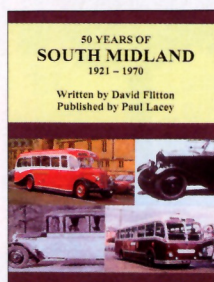
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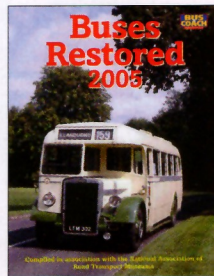
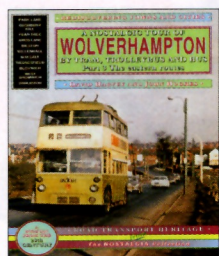
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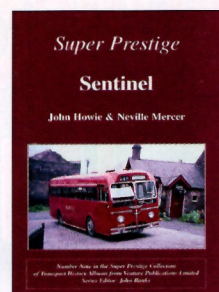
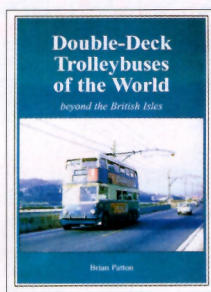
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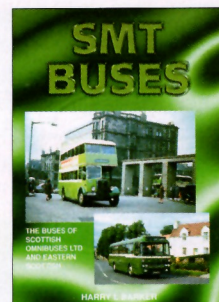
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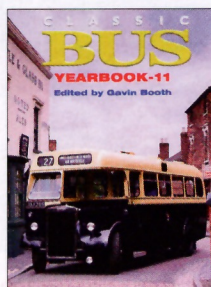
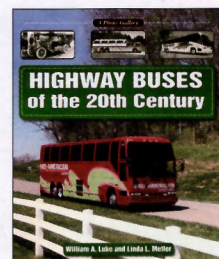
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Publicity Matters

JOHN CARR offers two-and-a-half cheers for the public transport information available from Dumfries & Galloway Council

Dumfries & Galloway is Scotland's southernmost region, covering over 2,000 square miles and stretching from the Irish Sea in the west to Eskdale in the east. Its two main centres of population, Dumfries and Stranraer, are nearly 70 miles apart and are the only towns in the region with over 10,000 inhabitants.

Of about 80 bus services on the D&G-produced map, roughly 75% are completely tendered but, unlike some English counties, that is not an excuse for poor service provision and the council's publicity also reflects a strong commitment to public transport.

I first became aware of D&G's timetable booklets when I picked up the Annan, Gretna and Langholm edition at Carlisle railway station. This is one of a series of seven (eight actually, as I shall explain later). The next one I found was in the tourist information centre in Moffat, and browsing through the two led me to appreciate just how good D&G seems to be.

Day Discoverer is a bargain

The high proportion of tendered services gives the region the clout to promote a Day Discoverer ticket, which is competitively priced at £5 per adult or £10 per family. With validity extending to the nearest centre of population beyond the boundary, one could easily travel from Carlisle to Stranraer and return, a round trip of over 200 miles. The journey would take over 4hr each way, mind you. One could even make the journey on a Sunday, although the idle time would be greater.

It is remarkable how good service coverage still is in this part of Scotland. Dumfries to Ayr commands five through journeys a day, Stranraer to Ayr eight and six of the latter show onward connections to Glasgow.

The booklets themselves are well laid out, with comprehensively footnoted timetables and connecting journeys shown clearly. The colour photos on the covers intrigued me. Unfortunately, Newton

Stewart shows a minibus with a cardboard destination sign in the windscreen, while Nith & Cairn Valley sports an X76-branded articulated Stagecoach Volvo heading for Dumfries on service 246. Nothing so exciting on the journeys I noticed.

The booklets would benefit from a bit more care in production. One or two maps indicated in the index are missing and while each booklet refers to service 10 'Dumfries Hospitals' in the index the word 'Dumfries' doesn't appear in the actual timetable for the service. But these are nit-picking complaints.

I mentioned earlier that there are eight booklets. The eighth, and only non-geographical one, is described as 'long-distance coach, train and ferry services'. I never tracked this one down, but by comparing the map to the timetable booklets I deduced that all bus services appear in the timetable for their area. The exception to this is the Dumfries area, which curiously contains none of the out-district

services. Thus routes to Stranraer, Ayr, Moffat, Lockerbie and Carlisle can only be found by picking up the other area booklets or, possibly, the unavailable long-distance booklet. This seems strange for the main centre of population.

Convenient information

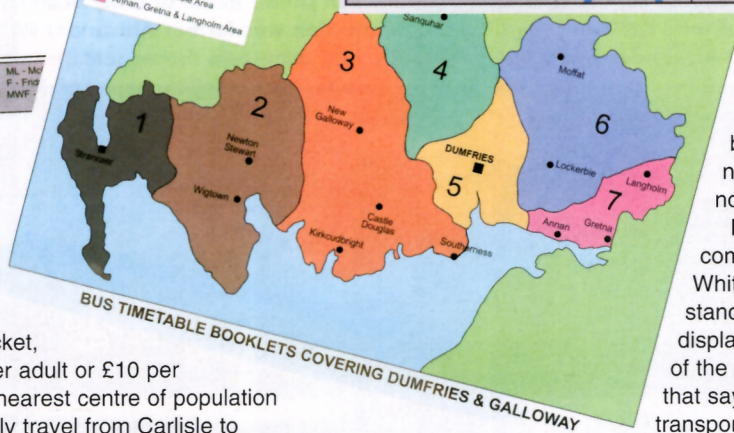
Two-and-a-half cheers, then, for a good network and well-produced publicity. Half a cheer lost for lack of availability. I am firmly of the opinion that timetables should be easily available and in rural areas this

generally means a tourist information centre. But while Moffat centre had the local booklet, Castle Douglas had nothing and even Dumfries had none.

I finally tracked the almost complete set down close to the Whitesands long distance bus stance in Dumfries. They were displayed on a stand in the vestibule of the public conveniences. What does that say about attitudes to public transport?



117 Dumfries - Hightae - Lochmaben - Lockerbie Monday to Saturday											
Bus Operator	ML	ME	WB	AL	WB	AL	WB	RM	RM	WB	WB
Route Number	704	119	117	118	117	118	117	PB	PB	110	117
Notes	SD	SD		Th	MMF	Th		NF	NF	Th	MMF
Dumfries, Lorneburn Centre	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Dumfries, Whitesands Stance 2	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Dumfries, Leaffield Road	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Carrietholm	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Annan, Butts Street	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Dalton	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Hightae, Townhead	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Lochmaben, Monument	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Lochmaben, Mossvale	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Templand, Village Hall	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Milnhousebridge	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Lockerbie, PO/Mans Meadow	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Lockerbie, Bridge Street	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---



We want to hear from readers, operators and transport authorities about how the industry is tackling the challenge of imparting accessible information to the travelling public — whether in timetables, leaflets or maps, at bus stops, bus stations or on the Internet. If you find items of interest (we want to hear about the good just as much as about the bad) and could write about 600 words on the subject, accompanied by photographs and/or publicity material, please contact the Editor at the Glasgow address shown on p2 or send an e-mail to alan@millar1.demon.co.uk.

On the Net

RICHARD DELAHOY experiences the joys and frustrations of planning a journey to the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum's 10th anniversary open day

It has long been an ambition to visit the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum and news of its 10th anniversary running day on 15 May set my mind working. What, you may ask, has this got to do with the Internet? Well, the Net is now the obvious place to plan and book such a trip. So this month, in a change to my usual style, I thought I would recount the experience — good and bad.

First, to check details of the event and the museum's location. Not knowing the museum's website address (the *Buses* rally calendar hadn't been published at the time), I simply typed 'SVBM' into a search engine — the BBC site is my favourite — and was immediately directed to www.busweb.co.uk/svbm/

This quickly confirmed the date and provided a location map, plus a lot more besides. I must confess that I don't like the rather haphazard layout of the home page and would much prefer a tidier page with a clear index immediately visible, but nevertheless I found what I needed. So far, so good.

Next, travel. From my home in Southend, flying from Stansted to Edinburgh is the obvious solution for someone who is time poor, to use that horrible modern idiom. I already knew that Ryanair and easyJet fly from Stansted, so it was easy to view their sites (the addresses are pretty obvious) to establish that easyJet serves Edinburgh. Booking was straightforward and I was offered a selection of flight times and prices.

Of course, the headline cheap fares — from £9.99 upwards, in this case — are not quite so cheap when taxes are added in, but I was able to select sensible flight times and book on-line. I already knew that I could use First's new X30

coach from Southend to the airport (the leaflet's on my bookshelf) but I could have also found times from www.firstgroup.com following the link 'Travel by bus', selecting my area and then destination — the timetable was displayed quickly.

Where are the Taxibuses?

Travel at the unfamiliar end of the route was more problematical. The SVBM site told me that there is a free bus link from Dunfermline. Isn't that where Stagecoach's Yellow Taxibuses go? Off to www.stagecoachbus.com to find out — or not, in this case. The recently revamped Stagecoach site has been praised elsewhere, so I had high expectations. The safest way in was to 'select operator by region' — Central and Southern Scotland; the next screen then asked which operator I wanted — A1 Service, Fife, Glasgow, Perth or Western. By now, an uninformed user would be confused — but Fife sounded right. The next step then asked me to select a route number — but how?

With no journey planner or even list of destinations, how could I find the bus I wanted among almost 80 entries? Try the text search — enter 'Dunfermline', and the list reduced to 29 services but none said 'Taxibus'. At this point, the technology having failed me, I dug out last September's *Buses*, which featured the service and called the phone number prominently shown in a photo of one of the vehicles. The helpful operator told me they couldn't take me directly to Edinburgh Airport. I didn't have the heart to ask if timetables were available on the website, but surely they ought to be. Stagecoach, please take note.

I could of have tried the government's new Transport Direct service —

www.transportdirect.info — and I did, until I gave up in disgust. My first issue was with the quick planner box; where are buses? Options offered are rail, coach, air and car — but no buses. Instead, I tried the door-to-door planner; Dunfermline to Edinburgh Airport shouldn't be that difficult, surely?

Why can't I find the airport?

It might not be difficult if the system could recognise 'Edinburgh Airport' as a 'station/airport', but apparently not, as it offered only rail and coach stations. I did persevere a bit more — quite a bit more — and eventually, seeking an airport arrival by 18.30 on Sunday evening, was only offered one journey combination, getting there at 21.23, half an hour after I should have landed at Stansted.

At this point I did give up, as I know there are more frequent buses, such as Stagecoach's half-hourly 55 from Dunfermline to central Edinburgh and Lothian's 100 (see www.flybybus.com) on to the airport every 10min. So to my final moan: on Lothian's site, www.lothianbuses.co.uk, why isn't the 100 listed in the drop-down route number list? I know it can be found under 'other services', but it has a number so why not list it?

Rant over. Will I get a trip on the elusive Yellow Taxibus? Will I catch my flight home? All may be revealed in my next column.

As usual, links to this month's featured sites are available at <http://efe.showbus.com/web> and I can be contacted at buses@signal-training.com

Richard Delahoy mentions the shuttle service that operates between Dunfermline and the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum on open days. Last August, one of the historic vehicles providing this connection was former Alexander PA181 (DRS 122A, CWG 283), a 1950 Leyland Tiger PS1 with 35-seat Alexander body. ALAN MILLAR



Preservation Update

SVBM plans tours for birthday running day

The Scottish Vintage Bus Museum marks the 10th anniversary of its move to Lathalmond in Fife with an extra running day on Sunday 15 May, when it will run hourly tours in addition to its customary shuttle service from Dunfermline.

The SVBM's Jasper Pettie says the museum was inspired by the success of tours run on Lincolnshire Vintage Vehicle Society open days and will operate 45 to 60min round trips through surrounding parts of Fife to give visitors an opportunity to sample longer rides in a variety of restored buses. He hopes that suitably licensed visiting vehicles will complement those resident at Lathalmond.

The trips will run on the hour from 12.00 to Saline and on the half-hour from 12.30 to Kelty, a mining village immortalised in a folk song about a bus conductress called the 'Kelty Clippie'. The Saline trips will include a photo stop.

The half-hourly shuttle — again with a variety of vehicles — will operate from Dunfermline bus station from 09.45. The museum will be open from 10.00 to 17.00 with admission charges of £5 (adults), £3 (child) and £12 (family).

A further theme of the day — which is in addition to the annual summer open weekend being held this year on 20/21 August — will be displays showing the evolution of buses through the decades to the present day.

Visitors will be able to see the huge progress that the SVBM has made since it secured possession of the 42acre site in March 1995. Then, it had a collection of 80 vehicles. Today, it has 180 and substantially more spare parts and equipment.

While this remains one of the biggest bus museum sites in the country, Jasper Pettie says that for practical purposes it is full in order to provide the circulation space that appeals to vehicle owners and visitors. By no means all of the buses at Lathalmond are local.



Above: Two resident vehicles at the August 2004 open weekend were Northern Counties-bodied A1 Service Daimler CVG6LX/30 RAG 578 and Duple-bodied McGill, Barrhead Guy Arab III GVD 47.

Among recent projects that visitors should see on 15 May is the total body rebuild currently being undertaken on JHT 802, a 1946 Bristol Tramways Bristol K6A with 1949 body, similarly stripped-down Sydney Albion Venturer 1877 (Preservation Update, January) and Crosville SNG588 (JTU 588T), a Series B Leyland National restored to National Bus Company leaf green.

Scottish projects on which progress has been made are the SVBM's Cowieson-bodied ex-SMT Leyland Tiger TS7 and its unique surviving ex-Alexander TS8 Special.

BUSY BUS DAY AT FOLKESTONE

Stagecoach and the M&D and East Kent Bus Club held an Easter Monday vintage bus running day to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the opening of Folkestone bus station. Fifteen vintage buses provided free rides on the routes operated 50 years ago alongside Stagecoach's usual Sunday services on which passengers within the town area could make a donation to the Sittingbourne-based Demelza House Hospice for Children rather than pay the usual fare.



Left: Stagecoach and vintage fleet drivers at Folkestone with a 1956 East Kent Guy Arab IV and 1959 AEC Regent V and a 1945 Maidstone & District Bristol K6A.

RALLY CALENDAR UPDATES - Please note that the Isle of Wight Bus Museum Open Day and Thamesdown Transport's depot open day will be on **Sunday 16 October only** and not as shown in Part 2 of our Rally Calendar last month. We are also advised that the Cumbria Steam Rally is being held on **30/31 July** and not the previous weekend.

Late news just received is that the Andover running day is being held on **11 September**, based as last year at the George Yard car park. Chairman Martin Ricketts says the routes will be less ambitious and better timed than in 2004.

APRIL

16/17 Brighton. 51st UK Coach Rally
17 Slough and Windsor Running Day.

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 23 | Cultra, Co. Down. Bus & Coach Rally. |
| 24 | East Grinstead Classic bus running day.
Middlesbrough Vintage Running Day. |
| 30
(to 2 May) | Llandudno Transport Festival. |
| MAY | |
| 1 | Gateshead MetroCentre bus rally,
Ipswich-Felixstowe Historic Vehicle Run.
London-Brighton Historic Commercial Vehicle Run. |
| 1/2 | Eastbourne. Magnificent Motors.
Dover Transport Museum grand re-opening weekend. |
| 7/8 | Manchester Museum of Transport.
Rear-engined weekend. |
| 15 | Stoke. Potteries Gathering at Wedgwood
Visitor Centre, Barlaston.
Portsmouth/Southsea. Dave Chalker Memorial Running Day |

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IN FLEET NEWS THIS MONTH

- **Arriva orders new fleet for Durham**
- **Lance replaces Lynxes at First Bristol**
- **Early Crosville National for Hoverspeed**
- **Thames Travel buys pink OmniDekka**

BODY TYPE

AB	Articulated single-deck bus
AC	Articulated coach
B	Rigid single-deck bus
C	Coach
DP	Dual purpose, usually coach seats in a bus shell
H	Double-decker
L	Lowbridge double-decker with side sunken gangway upstairs. All other double-deckers are H (highbridge) regardless of overall height.
M	Minibus
O	Permanent open-top
CO	Convertible open-top
PO	Partial open-top

SEATING CAPACITY

For double-deckers, this is shown with the upper deck capacity first (e.g. 43/30, indicating 43 'over' 30. Where the split is not known, a total figure (e.g. 73) is shown in the same style as for single-deckers. The total seating capacity shown includes all fixed and tip-up seats. The vehicles themselves may show other permutations of seats, standing spaces and wheelchair capacity.

DOOR POSITION

F	Front (can be directly behind front axle on vehicles with no front overhang)
R	Rear
RD	Rear with platform doors
C	Centre
D	Dual (two) doors
T	Triple doors

The letter 't' after the door position indicates the provision of a toilet, while 'L' after the door position shows that a wheelchair lift is fitted.

REGISTRATIONS

Registration numbers issued from 1 September 2001 show a two-letter area identification code (e.g. BU for Birmingham, CU for Swansea, SX for Inverness), followed by a two-digit code indicating the period of first registration (e.g. 51 for September 2001 to February 2002, 02 for March to August 2002, 52 for September 2002 to February 2003, 03 for March to August 2003 and so on. These are followed by a three-letter identification of the vehicle itself. In 'Fleet News', a batch of vehicles with consecutively issued registrations will be shown in the following fashion: LS34-46 (GG51 PYS/T/V-Z, PZB-F/H). The letters I and Q are not used in these three-letter combinations.

Where a vehicle has been re-registered, its previous registration number(s) (where known) follow in italic type (e.g. RM48 (LDS 199A, VLT 48), with the most recent given first.

AAA Transport Services, Luton

MAN coach JIL 2197 (H297 CFR) has been acquired for school contracts in the Borehamwood area and for driver training. Bedford YRQ/Plaxton GFE 179N has been purchased from Somerset-based WTTTS Training.

Accrington Transport

Optare MetroRider L178 KHG is unlikely to see further service following an accident at a well-known blackspot in Oswaldtwistle.

AK Travel, Smethwick

Dennis Dart 8.5SDL/Carlyle B28F H469 UGO is in stock from City Solutions.

Alfa Travel, Chorley

Five more Alexander Dennis R-series/Plaxton Paragon C53F due this year include PN05 AFE. They join 14 R-series on the company's UK and European tours.

Andrews, Braunstone, Leicester

Ex-Travel West Midlands MCW Metrobus MkII ROX 632Y is here.

Anglian, Beccles

A new depot has been opened in Norwich to handle increasing commitments in the area.

Archway, Poulton-le-Fylde

The City Sightseeing fleet for this summer comprises former London ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians

Right: Arriva Cymru 3995 (G35 HKY) at Pen-y-Pass on its first day in service with silver rather than Cotswold stone relief to its corporate aquamarine livery. This Northern Counties-bodied Scania N113DRB began life with Liverline in Liverpool. MAT SOUTHART

D149/63/94, 212/3/8 FYM, which replace the MCW Metrobuses used on the Blackpool Tour.

Arriva Cymru AA

More new VDL SB200/Wright Commanders are 2509-13 (CX05 AAE/F/J/K/N) for TrawsCambria service 94 (Wrexham-Barmouth). 2504-6 (CX54 EPJ-L) are branded for TrawsCambria service X32; 2510/1 have rear bicycle racks.

As noted under Arriva North West, which now includes Chester and Wrexham, the last former Crosville bus in regular service with Arriva in North Wales was Chester's Leyland Olympian/ECW 3094

(B194 BLG). However, open-top Bristol VR 3992 (YMB 512W) is to be used again this summer.

Cut-down Leyland Olympian ancillary vehicle 8199 (TPD 106X) has been noted apparently out of use at Caego and is understood to be withdrawn.

Arriva London AA

AEC Routemaster operation of the 19 (Battersea Bridge-Finsbury Park) ended on 1 April, although many of their initial replacements, Volvo B7TL/Alexander Dennis ALX400 VLA104-28 (LJ05 BKY/Z, BLF/K/N/V/X/Z, BMO/U, BKD/F/G/K/L/N/O/U/V/X, BJE/F/K/O/U), took their place a week or more before then. They were due to be replaced shortly afterwards by VDL DB250/Wright Pulsar Geminis DW103-34 (LJ05 BJV/X-Z, BKA, BHL/N-P/U-Z, BMV/Y/Z, BNA/B/D-F/K/L, GKX-Z, GLF/K/V/Y). In order to meet Transport for London's livery requirements, the DWs will probably lack the operator's trademark 'cow's horns', but the VLAs certainly have them.

Also new are B7TL/ALX400 H45/20D VLA94, 102/3 (LJ54 BDZ, BCU/V) and Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart B27D PDL112-6 (LJ54 LHN-P/R, LGV). With the closure of Arriva the Shires & Essex's Debden site, Dennis Dart SLF/Alexander ALX200 B26D ADL61-9, 71-9, 81 (W461 KXK etc) are now at Edmonton.

Leyland Olympians L316/8/2/3 (J316 BSH etc) have passed to **The Original London Sightseeing Tour**. Routemasters sold to dealers are RML882, 2329, 2678 (WLT 882, CUV 329C, SMK 678F) to Ensign, Purfleet and RML2354 (CUV 354C) to PVS, Barnsley. RML2668 (SMK 668F) has been scrapped. Darts DP301 (J301 WHJ), DRL152/4-8 (L152/4-8 WAG) have also been sold to Ensign.

Arriva Midlands AA

New VDL SB120/Wrightbus Cadets 2701/2 (YJ54 CKE/F) and all-over white Optare Solo YJ54 UBE are at Cannock. New Solos are to be numbered from 651 upwards.

Arriva North East AA

Durham is the next city in Arriva's sights for a 'big bang' approach of new and refurbished buses, with 27 new and 27 refurbished buses due in service in July. The new orders call for 14 of the Scania OmniCitys ordered by the group (p7 last month), following trials at Durham with OmniCity demonstrator YN54 OBA. The other new vehicles will be two Volvo B7TL/Alexander Dennis ALX400 double-deckers and 11 Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Darts.

Transferred to Northumbria from Arriva Southern Counties is DAF SB220LC/Ikarus B48F 4038 (J926 CYL).



Northumbria MCW Metrobus 604 (KYV 646X), Optare MetroRider 863 (M863 KCU) and Leyland Olympian 7263 (TPD 116X) are now at Durham, whence DAF SB220/Optare Delta 4012/20 (K412 BHN, L420 FHN) have gone to Tees.

MAN/Optare Vecta 1510 (K510 BHN) is back in service with a new MAN engine.

Withdrawn are MetroRiders 876/80 (M876 LBB, N880 RTN), 2729/37 (M443/1 HPF), Volvo B10M/East Lancs rebodies 2873/5 (H925/17 XYT) and ECW-bodied Olympian 7301 (C263 XEF). Northumbria MetroRiders 855/69/74 (L855 WRG, M869 KCU, M874 LBB) are being cannibalised. The remains of Metrobus 619 (A930 SUL), MetroRiders 752 (M752 WWR) and 935 (K726 HUG), Deltas 4083/92 (F792 DWT, G253 SRG) and ECW-bodied Olympian 7241 (A241 GHN) have gone for scrap. The withdrawal of ECW-bodied Olympian 7214 (WDC 214Y) is notable; its 22 years' service is understood to be a record for a former United vehicle, though ironically its replacement, Metrobus 604 (KYV 646X), is older still.

Arriva North West AA

A revised area structure is being put in place. North now comprises Southport, Bootle, Skelmersdale and Green Lane (ex-Central); East includes St Helens, Wythenshawe, Manchester and Huyton (ex-Central); South includes Winsford, Runcorn and Crewe, Macclesfield is a Crewe outstation; West comprises Birkenhead, Chester and Wrexham (all formerly in the South area); North Wales comprises Rhyl, Llandudno, Bangor and Aberystwyth (all formerly West).

The PSV Circle reports that new Optare Solo M850s 651-6 are registered MK54 YZR/T/U, MKL-N. They are hybrid diesel-electric versions and entered service on 27 February on Merseytravel's Liverpool city centre circular service in a special livery promoting the European Union's three-year Catch (for Clean Accessible Transport for Community Health) project.

Open-top Scania N113DRB/Northern Counties 3995 (G35 HKY) has been repainted in an aquamarine and silver version of corporate livery.

Ex-Arriva Southend Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties 3350 (N705 TPK) is in service at Huyton following repaint but dual-purpose 3354 (N709 TPK) remains on loan to Arriva Yorkshire.

All the ex-North Western Scania L113/Northern Counties single-deckers have destination blinds rather than electronic screens. However, Volvo Olympian 3278 (N278 CKB) has a new LED electronic indicator display and 3304 (N304 CLV) has been away to S&T, Blackburn for extensive accident repairs.

A notable retirement in January was ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian 3094 (B194 BLG) from Chester, the last former Crosville bus in service with Arriva in North Wales; it is expected to pass to the Stafford Bus Centre (dealer). Just four ex-Crosville vehicles remain with North West, Olympians 3022/37/8 and 3122 (A152 UDM, B197/8 DTU, C212 GTU) at Crewe.

Dumped at Crewe are cannibalised Leyland Lynx 1746 (G319 NNW), Leyland National 2 driver trainer 8190 (BCW 824V) from St Helens, Lynx 1743 (G49 GVC), Olympian 3059 (B149 TRN) and Volvo B58 8168 (124 YTW DEN 247W). Lynxes 1748/9 (H408 YMA, G329 NUM) are earmarked for conversion into driver trainers and 1731/2 (F301 AWW, F61 PRE) have become driver trainers 8183/91 respectively. Other withdrawals

are of Lynxes 1719/41 (E49 WEM, G41 VME) ECW-bodied Olympian 3094 (B194 BLG) and Northern Counties-bodied 3139 (F459 BKF). 3135 (F455 BKF) is awaiting disposal, while Lynx 1757 (K27 EWC) and Olympian 3219 (G759 UYT) are delicensed.

ECW-bodied Olympians 3069/96, 3121/6 (B969 WRN, B196 BLG, C211 GTU, C258 UAJ) have been broken up by Stafford Bus Centre (dealer), which is taking Mercedes-Benz minibuses 94-6/8/9, 127/9/38/40/53-5 (P394-6/8/9 FEA, M127/9 YCM, N468/70 SPA, N993-5 CCC) along with two Varios.

Lynx 1746 (G319 NNW) has gone for scrap and 1741 (G41 VME) is being cannibalised, but Olympian 3219 (G759 UYT) is back in service after receiving the gearbox from 3135.

Arriva Southend AA

All-Leyland Olympian 5404 (H264 GEV) was being retrimmed in March and is one of two tachograph-equipped vehicles. Dennis Tridents still active in mid-March were 5442/3/51 (W442 KXK etc), most commonly on service 7 for which they were new. The last two full-sized single-deckers, Dennis Lance/Wright Pathfinders 3379/84 (M269 VPU, M764 JPA), are usually found on services 7 and 9.

The Volvo B6 driver trainers remained in normal livery in March although the Leyland Lynxes they replaced were in trainer grey/white.

The Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer shown ablaze last month, 3424 (P424 HVX) has been withdrawn after all. From storage here, former Arriva Colchester DAF SB220/ikarus 4335-7 (J56 GCX, J926/7 CYL) departed for Arriva Derby in February.

Arriva Southern Counties AA

New at Northfleet are Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Dart B29F 1618-23 (GN05 ANU/V/X, AOA-C). The last Dennis Trident/Alexander H47/31F due from Arriva Southend have been received as E5438/41 (W438/41 KXK).

East Sussex County Council Optare Solo M850/B25F B540 (YN53 ELU) is at Tunbridge Wells in a blue livery with silver skirt and County Rider fleetnames. It became unavailable in February and blue M850/B23F former demonstrator S794 XUG, with Local Rider fleetnames, was received on loan.

A refurbishment for mid-life vehicles has begun at Maidstone; Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 3215 (P215 LKJ) has been sent to Arriva-owned Pickering, Thurmaston for this work.

Volvo Citybuses 7640, 7709 (G640 BPH, G660 DTJ) passed to Arriva Yorkshire, the latter at least for spare parts only. Transferred to Northumbria is DAF SB220LC/ikarus 4038 (J926 CYL). Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 3217 (P217 MKL) has been written off.

Leyland Lynx 3044 (E890 KYW) did not pass to the TGM group as expected and has remained in store.

Leyland Olympian/Alexander 5887 (F580 SMG) has been sold to Ensign (dealer), Purfleet, which sold it on to Theobalds, Luton.

Arriva the Shires & Essex AA

New are seven more Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urbans, 3861-7. 3861/2/5-7 are registered KE05 FMX/V/P/N/D/M; 3863/4 were noted carrying 'ARRIVA 1, 2' on their registration plates, for the launch of these vehicles on High Wycombe service 31 (Downley-

Penn); they should have entered service on 7 March, but this was delayed until April pending street works.

Recently acquired Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1RH/ECW H42/26F 5851 (C36 CHM) is also branded for the 31, but presumably for use only until the new Volvos entered service.

Also here are Scania K113CRB/Van Hool C44Ft 4352/3 (M52/3 AWW), which had been on loan to Network Colchester from Arriva Southern Counties.

The vehicles transferred from Sovereign Bus & Coach on 23 January have been renumbered. They are now: 2408/9 (M455/6 UUR), Mercedes-Benz 811Ds (ex-455/6) 3085/6 (KE53 KBO/P), Mini Pointer Darts (ex-584/5) 3240/1/5/8/9/98/9 (P601 RGS, R602-4/6/7 WMJ, R608 CNM), Volvo B6LE/Wright Crusader (ex-601-4/6-8) 3300-4/6-14/22/3 (R524 TWR, W128/9/31-4/6-8 XRO, PN02 HVS/L/M/O/R/P), Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown (ex-124/8/9/31-4/6-8, 140-5) 3330-2 (M234 TBV, M782/3 PRS), Volvo B10M/Alexander PS-type (ex-934/82/3) 3806-10 (KC03 PGE/F, KE54 GP/O/U), TransBus Pointer Dart (ex-505-9) 3840/5-52 (M101-5 UKX, R369-72 TWR), Volvo B10B/Wright (ex-101-5/69-72) 4012-4/41/2 (P316-8 RGS, KE51 WUO/P), Volvo B10M/Plaxton (ex-316-8, 301/2) 4029-32 (M101 CCD, L105 SDY, L149 BFV, L159 CCW), Dennis Javelin/Plaxton Interurban (ex-701/5/49/59) Leyland Lynx F402 PUR has become a driver trainer.

Following the closure of Debden, Dennis Dart SLF/Alexander ALX200s 3461-9/71-9/81 (W461 KXK etc) have been transferred to Arriva London.

Withdrawn are Dennis Dart/Wright Handybuss 3814 (G570 SGT) and all-Leyland Olympian 5129 (H199 GRO), but Alexander-bodied Olympian 5826 (E226 CFC) remains in service in Aylesbury.

Arriva Yorkshire AA

A further four former Arriva London Volvo Olympian/East Lancs H44/30F in service at Heckmondwike are 5147/8/21 (M697, 700/1/4 HPF), with 516/9/20 still to follow. Also from the south are Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer B40F 160 (K471 SKO), J465 MKL and K466 OKP from Southern Counties. 160 is at Castleford.

Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart 204 (V204 PCX) has been branded for services 492/493.

Withdrawn Leyland Lynx 2s 338/9/45/52 (H338/9 UWT, H345 UWV, H755 WWW) have passed to Arriva North East, 338 for ancillary use, 339/52 as driver trainers and 345 for cannibalisation.

The North Eastern traffic commissioner has given the company 10 months to improve maintenance standards.

ASD Coaches, Strood, Kent

MCW Metrobuses KYX 753X and B206 WUL have been sold to Ensign, which has sold the latter on to the London Borough of Ealing.

Avon, Prenton, Wirral

MAN 11.220/Marshall P472 JEG has passed to Stafford Bus Centre (dealer).

Barfordian, Bedford

New is Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Cheetah C29F YN05 HVB.

Barnsley & District YT

Eight low-floor Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renowns are coming from BlazeField Holdings for service 325 include ex-Keighley & District B47F-seated R369-72 TWR and ex-Sovereign R127 HNK.

Birmingham Coach Company, Tivdale

Former NCP Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart B29F V332 CVV is in use.

Blackpool Transport

Ex-Go North East Optare Excel L1150/B41F 219-21 (T880/1/4 RBR) have entered service as planned on Line 7, but apparently reliability of all 11 Excels is still causing concern and DAF SB220/Optare Deltas often substitute for them. Deltas are also used frequently on replacement service 111 while track on the southern section of the tramway is replaced, but accident damaged Delta 511 (S511 LHG) is in store at Marton.

Optare MetroRider 588 (N588 GRN) is back in traffic. Leyland Atlantean/East Lancs 350-2 (GHG 350W, UHG 351/2Y) are the latest to be sold.

Beeston, Hadleigh, Suffolk

Another new Scania OmniDekka N94UD/East Lancs is YN54 OBB.

Below: Arriva North West 652 (MX54 YZT), one of the hybrid Optare Solo diesel-electric midibuses, on the Liverpool city centre service on 1 March. LES LONG



GROUP CODES

AA

Arriva Passenger Services

BL

BlazeField Holdings

DG

Comfort Delgro

EB

Ensignbus

EY

EYMS Group

FG

FirstGroup

GA

Go-Ahead Group

NX

National Express Group

SG

Staus Bus & Coach Group

ST

Stagecoach Group

TD

Transdev

TGM

Tellings - Golden Miller

WG

Wellglade Group

YT

Traction Group

Black Prince, Morley

Optare MetroRider 237 (V237 LWU) has passed to Transit Group, Stansted.

Bluebird, Middleton

Dennis Dart SLF/Wright Crusader 20 (P20 BLU) has passed to Pearson, Huntington and Leyland Tiger/Plaxton 82 (TIL 1182, *F282 HOD*) has gone to Griffith, Y Felin Heli.

Brenton, Blackheath

Two Leyland Leopards have been donated to the Tsunami Asia Bus Response appeal.

Brighton & Hove GA

The rest of the new Scania N94UD OmniDekka/East Lancs H47/32F are 649-54 (YN05 GZH/J/L/O/P/R), named *Adam Faith*, *Prince Petr Kropotkin*, *John Langridge*, *Sir William Nicholson*, *James Osborne* and *Jack Solomons* respectively. The company aims to have a wholly low-floor fleet within four years and single-deck operation on Metro 5 is to be phased out.

Dennis Dart driver trainer T1 (J980 JNJ) has been repainted in a new training livery of red and yellow (in latest layout style) with a giant L-plate plate on the sides. Repaints are also being undertaken at Conway Street, London Truck & Bus and Caetano.

Bromyard Omnibus

Further new Optare Solos here are Herefordshire-funded SlimLine J222 BUS, named *Jack* and J111 BUS, named *Jill*, while an acquisition from Courtney, Bracknell is standard width W251 DWT named *Edith*.

Leyland National 2/B52F B363 LOY has been acquired from Young, Lame and branded for new commercial service 419 (Bromyard-Hereford). It is supplemented by Volvo-engined Leyland National Greenway HLZ 4439 (*GCY 748N*) from Dukes, Coleford. The National 2 works the service on weekdays, a Solo at weekends.

Meanwhile, this company's predilection for rebodied vehicles continues with the acquisition of Leyland Leopard/Plaxton EFX 336T (*TTK 584*, *EHJ 76T*, *MED 270F*) from Hewitt, Torrington for spares and Leyland Tiger/East Lancs TPC 104X from Helms, Eastham for service.

A further acquisition operated during December and January was Mercedes Benz 609D/M2M B22F J9 JPT from Deveron, Macduff, but this was sold to an operator in Harare, Zimbabwe in February.

Brylaine, Boston

Optare Solo VU02 TTE has been sold to Stringer, Pontefract.

Bryn Melyn, Llangollen

Another of the five new BMC 1100FE/DP70F schoolbuses to enter service is BX54 VUC, delivered through Owens, Oswestry (dealer). Volvo B10M-60/Plaxton Expressliner C49Ft F258 BHF (*NXI 9006*) was on loan while remedial work has been carried out on one of the other BMCs. The last ECW-bodied Bristol VRT here, GGM 110W, has been sold.

Bullocks, Cheadle

Three new Scania OmniCitys on new service 147, linking Piccadilly station and the universities and Royal Infirmary are YN05 GZX-Z.

Burnley & Pendle BL

It seems our BlazeField reports last month were a little over-exuberant, with some items a little premature. The Keighley & District Mini Pointer Darts mentioned last month are on their way but were in Keighley & District's paintshops when the magazine was published and the cascade of the X43 Volvo B7TLs won't happen as shown, as eight are bound for Harrogate & District. Lancashire United operates route 152 so seven of the B7TLs will transfer there for that service.

West Yorkshire Information Service points out that the 25 B7RLEs on order for next year will not replace B6s — they are replacing the Mainline B10BLEs, 1042-4/6-9/51-4/7-9/61-9/71/2 (Y142 HRN etc).

ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians 2152/78 (B152 TRN, C178 ECK) went to Shamrock, Poole.

Burton, Haverhill TGM

Ex-Metrobus Volvo Olympian/East Lancs S849/52 DGX have been re-registered S10, 20 BCL, but it's not confirmed yet which is which.



Above: Blackpool Transport has bought three Optare Excels from Go North East's Coastline fleet. This is pool-liveried 220 (T881 RBR). **MICHEL CRISP**



Above: YN05 GZZ is one of the three new Scania OmniCitys that Bullock's is using on Manchester service 147. **LUKE GOTTARD**

Caradon Riviera, Upton Cross, Cornwall

Optare MetroRider MR03/B26F K427 HWY is acquired ex-Allensway, Heathfield.

Cardiff Bus

White-liveried Optare MetroRiders withdrawn are DP 103 (L103 GBO) along with bus-seated 106/10/6/29 (L106 GBO, M110/6/29 KBO); 103/6/10/6 are sold, as is 139 (N139 PTG). MetroRiders 115/21/32/42 (M115/21/32 KBO, N142 PTG) have gone to Coakley, Motherwell and 123-5/7 (M123-5/7 KBO, N139 PTG) to Thomson Glasgow. Another Volvo Ailsa withdrawn is Northern Counties-bodied 406 (NDW 406X).

Carousel, High Wycombe

AEC Routemaster RM2198 (CUV 198C) has joined the operational fleet for private hires.

Castle Buses, Liverpool

Former Nottingham City Transport Leyland Olympian/East Lancs H49/35F K481 GNN is an addition.

Centra Passenger Services

Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Dart KP54 BYR is at work on the BAA Heathrow Staff Shuttle.

Central Buses, Sutton Coldfield

Former Go North East Optare MetroRider MR03/B26F K367 SCN is in service while ex-Arriva Fox County Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander Sprint B27F N356 OBC is only on loan from Staffordshire Bus Centre. From Woods, Wigston comes Mercedes-Benz 709D/Reeve Burgess Beaver AHZ 5196 (*J218 KTT*).

Plaxton-bodied 709D AHZ 5136 and Optare MetroRider K390 TCE have been exported.

Chesterfield Community Transport

A notable purchase here is the first production body from the newly resurrected Frank Guy concern, on Mercedes-Benz Vario 614D FJ54 WEA.

Ausden Clark, Cossington, Leicester

The last Leyland Atlanteans in this fleet, Roe-bodied KPJ 248W and Northern Counties-bodied 'Nottingham standard' MNU 692W have departed, the former sold to ECH, Newton. Previously withdrawn 'Manchester standard' Northern Counties-bodied ANA 597Y is with C&N Travel, Leicester.

Classic Coaches, Annfield Plain TGM

MCW Metrobus UWW 512X has gone to London Bus Export Company, Chepstow (dealer).

Collier, Erith, Kent

One-time Travel Dundee Volvo Ailsa B55-10/East Lancs A287 TSN is a yellow schoolbus here.

Countryliner, Guildford

Dennis Javelin/Duple 300 B55F G621 CPS has been acquired ex-South Lancs, Atherton.

Courtney, Bracknell

Another Optare Solo is B33F YJ54 UXA, while Solo W251 DWT has been sold to Bromyard Omnibus. Volvo Olympian/East Lancs S848 DGX has returned to Dawsonrentals, following the arrival of S847/53/4/7 DGX, converted to H47/29F. As reported last month, S848 DGX passed to Chambers, Bures.

Cresswell, Moira, Leicestershire

Ex-First Essex Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton Beaver K636 GVX is in use.

D&G, Adderley Green, Staffs

New are Cheshire-owned Optare Solos 64-69 (YJ54 ZYA-F) in Cheshire blue and yellow livery rather than the white livery carried by Mercedes Benz Varios that preceded them. Varios 92/4 (T133/5 ARE) are being retained. The Plaxton-bodied Varios on loan from Dawsonrentals are confirmed as 96-9 (S390 HVV, S552 BNV, V248 BNV, S775 BLG). Dennis Dart/East Lancs 7 (ENZ 4635, L903 JRN) has transferred to Crewe.

De Courcey, Coventry

Further MAN 14.220NL/HOCL/MCV Evolution B39F in service are 544/5 (AE54 JRX, MVW), 545 in Tesco livery for recently introduced routes serving the new Tesco Extra superstore at the Arena retail park. Similar MANs AE54 JRO/U/V are numbered 541-3.

Dennis Darts on loan, including T418 MNH, are being returned to Dawsonrentals (dealer), Hellaby as the new MANs arrive.

Delaine, Bourne

Former GM Buses Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties 134 (ANA 10Y) is being cannibalised to keep the remaining three identical vehicles running here.

Dennis's, Dukinfield

As reported in this month's News and under the buyer's heading, Stagecoach Manchester took over this business on 1 April. Before then, Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus J610/23 HCU went to Rapsons, Inverness.

Dunn-Line, Nottingham

New TransBus Pointer Darts are 5407-9 (FD54 FGE-G) in gold over bronze livery; 5407/8 are branded for 'Lynx 2' (Mansfield-Kirkby-in-Ashfield).

As expected, another Mercedes Vario/Plaxton Beaver B27F from Arriva Midlands via Stafford Bus Centre is R127 LNR, which, like the others, is being converted to automatic transmission.

Ex-Seamarks Volvo B6LE/Wright Crusader S583 VOB has passed to South Gloucester Bus & Coach via Stafford Bus Centre. Leyland Lynxes G109, 310 EOG were acquired by Sun Fun, Cambridgeshire, in February and G313 EOG by Colman Donohue, Co Galway, Ireland.

Mercedes-Benz O404/Hispano Vita W391 PRC has returned to Key Leasing while similar W402 PRC was withdrawn last November. Dunn-Line still has Scania N112/East Lancs ex-demonstrator E200 WHS.

EasiRider, Huddersfield

This operator is supplying Mercedes-Benz minibuses for use in Yorkshire Television's *Emmerdale*. Carlyle-bodied G65 SNN has appeared in full EasiRider livery and mostly white Leicester Carriage Builders-bodied L326 AUT has also, carrying 'Hottenbus' fleetnames.

Eastbourne Buses

Although carrying Eastbourne Buses fleetnames, all Leyland Olympian 256 (G305 UYK) has yet to enter service.

Further vehicles in allover dark blue are Optare Excel 47 (R215 DKG), Dennis Dart 48 (T467 EGT) and DAF DB250/Optare Spectra 274 (R874 MDY).

VDL SB120/Wright Merit 58 (GX04 LWT) has still to return here following fire damage last August and Volvo B6BLE 515 (W672 WGG) remains on loan from Volvo. DAF SB220/Ikarus Citibus 116 (L416 UNJ) is delicensed pending disposal.

Eastonways, Ramsgate

Ex-Metroline Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer B39F P290 MLD is here.

East-West, West Bromwich

Acquisitions from Arriva Yorkshire are Optare MetroRider MR15/Optare B31F L734 MWW and L739 PUA.

East Yorkshire EY

Volvo B10M/Plaxton Expressliners 43/4 (V843 JAT, W844 SKH) have been re-registered respectively A14 EYC, EYH 876. Volvo B10M/Plaxton Paramount 146 (EYH 876) has reverted to E52 WAG. The previous A14 EYC, Volvo/Expressliner 64 (L64 CKH), was scrapped late last year.

Ebley Bus, Nailsworth, Glos

Dennis Darts are popular here, five with Carlyle Dartline bodies being 2817, 3512/3/24/5 (H142 MOB, H843 NOC, H887/6/9 LOX) and two with Reeve Burgess are 3510/20 (H104/5 CHG).

ECH, Tollerton, Notts

A second former Supreme, Hadleigh MCW Metrobus is KJW 288W and Leyland Atlantean/Roe KPJ 248W is ex-Ausden Clark, Cossington. Bedford PJK/Plaxton Supreme IV C956 FVH is still in use; it has a wheelchair lift and was acquired from Roberts, Cuminestown.

Edwards, Llantwit Fardre

New are two more tri-axle Bova Futuras, WA54 HYF/G. Leyland Leopard/Plaxton PWL 939W (LWL 745W) has gone for scrap.

Elkin, Sutton Coldfield

This operator has a penchant for the Leyland Royal Tiger Doyen, ex-Nottingham E785/6 BTV examples being reunited after service with, respectively, West Kent, West Kingsdown and Premiere, Nottingham.

Emblings, Guyhirn, Cambs

Leyland Tiger/Duple Dominant KTL 27Y is here from Fowler, Holbeach Grove; it was new to Delaine, Bourne. Also acquired is Bristol VRT/SL3/ECW EAP 973V from Bee & Gee, Chingford.

Leyland Leopard/Duple XIL 8033, Duple-bodied

Bedford XIL 8166, Leyland National KHT 125P and Leyland Tiger/Alexander XIL 8034 have been painted yellow for school contracts.

Ensign, Purfleet EB

Low-floor operation of the X80 (Gravesend-Bluewater) has begun with UVG-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs 702/5 (P82 MOR, P505 MOT), with four more to follow.

One-time East Kent MCW Metrobus MkII/H43/27F 161 (F761 EKM) is an addition to the fleet from Mullaney, Watford. Volvo Olympian 161 (R241 LGH) has been renumbered 151.

Northern Counties-bodied Darts 701/2/18/9 (L101 HHV etc) have been sold to Glenvale, Liverpool.

Express Motors, Penygroes

MAN 14.220/East Lancs Millennium YN03 YBB has been acquired for service 1.

Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Cheetah YP52 KRK has been re-registered QJC 496, while all of the Bova Futura coaches have been re-registered as B2-5 OVA.

Marshall minibus R405 XFL is still in use but ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian TSO 20X is parked up at Bontnewydd and Mercedes-Benz 811D/Alexander F670 XMS is being cannibalised. Two Mercedes-Benz 307D minibuses, one Dennis Falcon and a Leyland Leopard have been donated to the Asia Bus Response appeal.

After many years in store, Bristol SC4LK/ECW FB35F OVL 494 (new to Lincolnshire) and 604 JPU (new to Eastern National) have been sold for preservation. Eastern National only operated its SC4LKs until summer 1964, so this survivor is all the more remarkable.

Fairbrother, Wigan

Ex-Stagecoach Manchester Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/Northern Counties H43/30F B74 PJA is in use. It arrived in allover blue, and has had a broad cream band added below the lower deck windows.

Fargo, Rayne, Essex

Leyland Olympian/ECW H45/32F C651/7 LJR, ex-Go North East, and ex-Arriva Midlands A512 EJF, together with one-time Arriva North East (latterly with McKindless, Wishaw) DPH42/28F-bodied A563 KWY have been acquired via Ensignbus (dealer), Purfleet.

Felix, Stanley, Derbyshire

Alexander Dennis Enviro300 demonstrator SN54 HXG was here for a short time in early February.

First Berkshire FG

Another BMC 1100FE B60F schoolbus at Bracknell is 68531 (LK54 FNC), while Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties H47/27D 34106 (T906 KLF) has arrived from First London.

Scania L94UB/Wright Access 833 (S102 CSG) has had its fleetnumber corrected to 65602, having run as 65633 in error for several months.

Only a few vehicles remain in yellow livery following the repaint of Scania L113CRL/Northern Counties 49618/9 (M818/9 PGM) and Dennis Dart/Plaxton 42918 (N818 FLW). Still yellow is Volvo Olympian 174 (P174 TGD), which recently returned to service following an engine fire in July 2003 and is renumbered 34274.

Dennis Dart/Plaxton 46082/3 (K282/3 XJB) and 46196/8 (L206/8 GMO) have gone to Hampshire Body & Paint at Eastleigh for cascade to First Somerset & Avon. Dennis Javelin coach 21090 (M290 FAE) has gone to First London for rail replacement work.

First Bristol FG

Right: Besides its five new Scania OmniDekkas, First Devon & Cornwall Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver 2 minibus 50301 (S407 GUB) carries the new Tamar Link livery for services that use the Torpoint Ferry between Plymouth and north-east Cornwall.
STEVE RICE



First West Yorkshire Dennis Lance/Plaxton Verde B49F transferred here to replace Leyland Lynxes include 60964/5/71/81/90-3 (M426/7/33 VVVV, N443 ENW, N452-5 JUG), 61011/2/5 (N473/4/7 JUG). Lynxes withdrawn are 62650/1/3 (H650/1/3 YHT).

First Coaches FG

The fourth Volvo B7R/Plaxton Prima C53F for the Bristol Airport service is 20307 (WX05 OZF). First Manchester Optare Solos 53147-50 (MX54 GZE-H) have been on loan to for rail replacement work.

First Cymru FG

New Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart B31F in February were 42600-14 (CU54 HYK-P/R/T/V-Z, HZA/B).

Withdrawn are ex-Davies, Pencader Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Paramount 22021 (F721 ENE) and Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus 45385 (JDZ 2385).

First Devon & Cornwall FG

Eight more Alexander Dennis Trident/East Lancs Millennium Lolyne double-deckers are on order, to be painted in standard Barbie livery. The five in Tamar Link livery finally entered service in March. Those positively identified include 32758/9 (WA54 OLT/N) named *Swan* and *Egret* respectively. Also in this livery is Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver 50301 (S407 GUB).

Transferred here from First Glasgow are Volvo Olympian YN2RV18V3/Alexander RL-type H47/32F 31457/9/61 (N968/70/2 SOS) and AEC Routemaster R2RH/Park Royal H40/32R 39390 (JJD 390D). The bus used on last year's new 'Primrose Explorer' Kingsbridge-Dartmouth tourist service, Leyland Atlantean AN68A/1R/Alexander O45/29D 39903 (HRS 271V), went in the opposite direction.

More Mercedes-Benz Vario O814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B22F from First Wyvern are 52519/50/2 (S519/50/2 RWP).

First Eastern Counties FG

New deliveries for Sprowston Park-&Ride are Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban 69005-11 (AU05 DME/F/O/V/X-Z) in an allover lilac version of the hitherto green P&R livery. Meanwhile Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini 32537-9 (YJ05 VUX/W, VWG) are in service in Norwich on loan from West Yorkshire. They were delivered as YJ54 XVE-G but were re-registered before entering service. 32539 is going to West Yorkshire via a rather roundabout route, as it's already been in service in Aberdeen.

Following the revision of Excel services X1-X5, coaches 20101/3-5/7/9/11/2/4/6-20/2/3/30/42 (N601/3-5/7/9/11/2/4/6-9 APU, P330 RVG, P732/3 NVG, P770 XHS, R842 DVF) and 20500-9 (AO02 RBX-Z, RCF/U/V/X-Z, RDU) carry Excel fleetnames.

ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian 34498 (FUM 498Y), the last of the ex-Keighley Voith transmission examples, is being used to keep others on the road. All-Leyland Olympian 34973 (J623 BVG) has been inactive for more than a year at Yarmouth.

First Essex FG

Optare Solo SlimLine demonstrator YT54 BJE was on loan at Harwich in February, temporarily numbered 90246 and used on town route 22 (Long Meadows), pending delivery of First's own narrow Solo.

Leyland Olympians 34808/10/4 (C408 HJN etc) are the only ones still in yellow/green sash livery, while 34817 (C417 HJN) is still in the short-lived 'Anglian

continued overleaf...

corporate' version with brighter green skirt and deeper yellow, while 34813 (C413 HJN) is still branded for Colchester-Harwich services 103/104 despite being at Basildon. 34811 is correctly registered C711 GEV.

Ex-First Potteries Dennis Lance/Northern Counties 60102 (P868 MBF) has been working from Chelmsford and others may join it.

All Southend Borough Council-contracted services were deregistered from 31 March following the council's removal of all tendered bus funding. This was expected to see the end of the Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton Beavers at Hadleigh and 709D 51475 (M675 VJN) has become a driver trainer.

First Hampshire & Dorset FG

A sixth Scania OmniDekka N94UD/East Lancs has been ordered for service X53 (Bournemouth-Exeter), but will be painted in standard Barbie livery.

Hilsea's complete batch Scania OmniCity CN94UB/B41F is 65006-25 (YN54 NZA/C-H/J/K/M/O/P/R/T/U-Z). 65006/9/10/23 carry Zip branding and 65012/7/22/4 are branded for service 40. Swedish-registered tri-axle Scania OmniLink OEM 643 has been inspected.

Volvo B10M-60/Plaxton Paramount III 3500 C51Ft 20054 (WNN 734, G541 LWU) new to Wallace Arnold, has been on loan for driver training from First Devon & Cornwall. Yellow Buses Dennis Lance/East Lancs B48F 403-5 (L403-5 BFX) have returned off-loan from this purpose at Weymouth, but Target Travel, Plymouth Scania K113CRB/Van Hool Alizée C48Ft M360/5 LFX are in use as trainers at Hilsea and Hoeford.

As reported in David Jukes's feature last month, the Leyland Atlantean era has finally ended with East Lancs-bodied 38264/72/4-6 (DBK 264W, KOW 272/4-6Y) withdrawn, leaving just 38270 (FTR 270X) in service on the last day, 5 February. 38252 (YRV 252W) went to a Basingstoke preservationist, 38264 (DBK 264W) to Black & White Motorways, Portsmouth, 38268 (FTR 268X) to a Southampton preservationist.

Volvo Olympians 34059/69 (P559/69 EFL) have been transferred to First Manchester.

Convertible Bristol VRT 39937 (VDV 137S) reported last month has not come here after all.

First Leicester FG

Volvo B7L/Wright Eclipse 66301 (KV02 VVC) is back after a six-week loan to First Northampton, but 66316 has gone there and 66302 (KV02 VVD) remains there.

First Wyvern Alexander Dennis Tridents 33401-5 remained in service here longer than expected. Pending tree-lopping in their intended home at Redditch they will stay hereabouts; 33402 (VX54 MTY) has been transferred to Northampton, with the others expected to follow. 33405 only ventured to Redditch for the official launch, returning the following day.

Ex-First Wyvern Leyland Lynxes 62723/42 (G123/42 HNP) entered service in February, 62742 after use as a driver trainer.

Dennis Falcon 67614 (F614 RTC) was the one repainted into latest Barbie livery from Reg Vardy overall advertisement.

Only one Dennis Dominator, 39146 (F146 MBC), remained in service by Easter, following withdrawal of 39088 (E88 HNR). 39129/49-52/67 (G629 EKA, F149-52 MBC, G667 FKA) are stored, withdrawn, 39129 and 39149 both with fire damage, as are Volvo B6s 48024/74/80 (L4 GML, L674/80 RMD). Dominators 39078/81/91/2/5/8 and Mercedes-Benz 50731-3 have been sold to scrap dealers. Happier news is that Dominator 253 (MUT 253W) is in preservation and was collected by its new owner in January.

First London FG

New are articulated Mercedes-Benz Citaro G AB49T EA11039/40 (LK54 FKW/X) and B21F short SlimLine Optare Solos OOS53701-6 (LK05 DYO, DXP/R-U). Ex-First Berkshire Dennis Javelin/Plaxton Paramount C46Ft DC21090 (M290 FAE) is at Rainham for rail replacement work.

Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties 34106 (T906 KLF) has gone to First Berkshire.

First Manchester FG

The new articulated Scania OmniCitys began arriving in late-March; they are numbered 12001-18, with 12001 registered YN05 GYA. One of the first of the 140 new Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urbans is Oldham-based 66796 (MX05 CBV). New Scania/Irizar Century coach 23021 is registered YN54 APF.



Above: First Eastern Counties 69011 (AU05 DMZ), one of the Wright Eclipse Urban-bodied Volvo B7RLEs painted lilac for the park-&-ride work. DAVID C. SMITH

Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties H49/33F 34059/69 (P559/69 EFL) have been transferred from First Hampshire & Dorset, while similar but H47/30F-bodied 34293/5 (P293/5 KPX) have come from First Devon & Cornwall. Volvo Olympians 34252/3 (M402/3 RVU) are in service at Bolton with Leyland Olympian 34333 (H132 FLX) at Wigan.

Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties H49/33F 34059/69 (P559/69 EFL) have been transferred from First Hampshire & Dorset, while similar but H47/30F-bodied 34293/5 (P293/5 KPX) have come from First Devon & Cornwall. Volvo Olympians 34252/3 (M402/3 RVU) are in service at Bolton with Leyland Olympian 34333 (H132 FLX) at Wigan.

Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall Capital B22D 41208/26/8 (R208/26/8 TLM) have also been received, 41208/28 from First London, 41226 from First Glasgow.

Repaints are progressing in the revised standard Barbie livery, Volvo B10Bs 60319/25/46/7 (N524/30/51/2 WVR) being recent. Optare Solos 53147-50 have been on loan to First Coaches for rail replacement work in Avon.

The PSV Circle records the withdrawal of Leyland Olympian 30128 (S113 SJA) and Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 50133/5/6/40/3/5 (M239/11/8/09/7/29 VWU).

First Northampton FG

New are Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini 32627-35 (KP54 KAO/U/X, KBE/F/J, LAE/O, KX05 MGV), while another low-floor double-decker in service here is First Wyvern Dennis Trident 33402 (VX54 MTY), transferred from Leicester. The other four in the batch (33401/3-5) are expected to follow.

Duple-bodied Volvo Citybus 66111 (E111 ANV) was destroyed by fire in mid-February.

First Potteries FG

Transferred here from First Glasgow in February were Volvo Olympian/Alexander Royale DPH47/28F 31518/9/22 (M847/9/8 DUS, WLT 677/8, 910).

First Somerset & Avon FG

More new vehicles for Bath are Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Geminis 32637/8 (WU54 EHN/O), B29F 9.2m Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts 42553-7 (WX05 UAK-O) and B37F 10.2m Pointer/Darts 42895-901 (WX05 RUW/Y, RVA/C/E/F/J).

Dennis Dart/Plaxton 46082/3 (K282/3 XJB) and 46196/8 (L206/8 GMO) are due from First Berkshire. Bristol VRT 39937 (VDV 137S) went to preservationist Colin Billington, and not First Hampshire & Dorset as shown last month.

Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 50970/93, 51085, 51243, 51535/72/4 (K870 NEU, K693 UVF, L885 VHT, M242 VYA, M835/72/50 ATC) have been withdrawn. 50993 and 51219 (M19 ABC) have been sold and 51535 has gone for scrap. Leyland Lynx 62556 (H856 GRE) is being converted into a driver trainer at Rotherham while 62560 (H610 YTC) has gone to First West Yorkshire.

Volvo B10BLE 66117 (R917 BOU) is out of service with fire damage. Volvo B10M/Alexander P-types 66500/4/5/7 (UFX 940, D104/5/7 GHY) have been sold, 66500/7 for scrap.

First South Yorkshire FG

Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown DP47F 66101/12-4/9 (R901 BOU etc) from First Somerset & Avon are to have headrests removed, wheelchair ramps, ignition switches and anti-assault screens fitted, as well as being repainted and repainted before entering service.

Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties 34246 (P246 HMD) is in service at Rotherham.

After many months of repairs, the arson-attacked Volvo B7L/Wright Eclipse 60719 it is back in service at Olive Grove. Volvo B10M-55/Alexander PS-types 60469/72/5-7 (G624/7/30-2 NWA) are back in service; a plan to use them as driver trainers in Poland has fallen through.

The last genuine Rotherham-based Dennis Dominator, 30462 (A414 YAK), has been given preserved status. However, 30421/73 (SDT 262Y, A434 YAK) have gone to PVS, Carlton (dealer).

The remaining Leyland Titan PD3 towing vehicles, M1 (DUG 167C) and M16 (OWJ 782A, 819 CWW), were placed in reserve on 4 February owing to 'licensing technicalities'. Happily, Roe-bodied M52 (OWJ 388A, 4475 WE) is in preservation in South Yorkshire having recently returned north from the London area. Leyland National 11 (AAK 111T) is also preserved by the SYT National Group. A third survivor is Rotherham Transport's AEC Matador recovery truck — apparently an early example — which lasted right through to South Yorkshire PTE days (numbered M50). Operated for most of its life on trade plates it is now registered FSK 502.

First West Yorkshire FG

Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini H45/29F 32537-9 (YJ05 VUX/W, VWG), delivered as YJ54 XVE-G, are on loan to Eastern Counties in Norwich. 32539 and 32540/1 (YJ05 VWE/F, YJ54 XVH/K) were on loan to First Aberdeen before then. 32542 was delivered as YJ54 XVL.

Three further BMC 1100FE/B60F yellow schoolbuses are 68523-5 (YK54 GZD-F). A further three have been delivered and are B55F, but were unregistered and unnumbered at the time of writing.

Forty Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban B40F due at Huddersfield include 66738-55 (YJ54 XVM-P/R/T/U/W-Z, XWA-H) and 66756/7 (YJ05 KNX/Y), while similar but B43F-seated 66711-5 (YK04 EZJ/L/G/M/H) have been transferred to Bramley from First York. Original B7RLE 66700 (YJ53 HVC) has been given an additional nearside luggage pen, reducing it to B36F (from B43F), for the Leeds-Leeds Bradford Airport service.

Scania L113CRL/Wright Access-ultralow 61055/6 (P435/6 USH) have been transferred from Bramley to Cherry Row garage in Leeds and fitted with guide wheels for use on the Scott Hall Road and York Road guideways, both having originally had these fitted for use on service 363 (Huddersfield-Bradford); they were removed on transfer to Bramley.

Huddersfield Dennis Dart 40669 (R332 HYG) wears MetroConnect white with grey and red for service MC4 (Elland-Lowfields Business Park). Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renowns 60841/9 (W801/9 DWX) are black and white Bradford Metropolitan Council safety campaign buses.

Constituent liveries continue to fade, survivors in Leeds red/orange including Leyland Olympians 30598, 30616/20/1/4, Volvo Olympian 30744, Dennis Dart 40632 and Scania N113s 61091, 61112/5/8; Calderline

blue/yellow on Leyland Olympians 30613-5/25-7/83, 30775/6, MCW Metrobus 31056, Dart 4036, Mercedes-Benz Varios 50302/3 and Volvo B10B 60787; and Huddersfield green on Metrobuses 31046/7/50/1.

Dennis Lances being transferred from to First Bristol include Huddersfield's 60964/5/81/90-3 (M426/7 VWW, N443 ENW, N452-5 JUG), Halifax's 60971 (M433 VWW) and Cherry Row's 61011/2/5 (N473/4/7 JUG). Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 40090 (K923 XRF) and Alexander-bodied 40616/20/8 (M244/8/59 VWW) are out of service, as are Optare Aleros 50409/10 (YN03 UXZ, UYP).

Withdrawn are ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians 30774/8 (B518 UWW, A745 JRE), MCW Metrobus/Alexander 30395 (BLS 432Y) and all-MCW 31042 (BYX 308V), along with accident damaged Mercedes-Benz/Plaxton driver trainer 51010 (L810 SAE).

Leyland Olympians 30533/5/95 (XDU 178, CUB 28/3Y), 30773 (FUM 489Y), Metrobuses 31040/9/52/8/63/5/6/8 (GYE 374W, B244 WUL, C421 BUV, GYE 484W, EYE 319V, GYE 347/9, 442W), Mercedes-Benz 709D 51010 and Leyland Leopard driver trainer 90089 (JKW 216W) are understood sold to PVS, Carlton (dealer) for scrap. Happily, Roe-bodied Leyland Atlantean trainer 90054, formerly 6115 (LUG 115P), has passed to the Huddersfield Transport Museum.

Metrobus 31062 (BYX 211V) went to the Funtime Factory at Wymondham, Norfolk for conversion into a playbus but was attacked by vandals and departed on 31 January for scrap.

Following maintenance warnings, the North Eastern traffic commissioner cut this operator's licence authorisation from 1,125 vehicles to 946 in January. It's asserted this will not affect services, although peak vehicle requirement is understood to have been 988.

First Wyvern FG

Although 33405 took part in an official launch of the new low-floor fleet at Redditch on 28 January, Alexander Dennis Trident/ALX400s 33401-5 (VX54 MTU/Y/Z, MUA/B), are still awaited at Redditch, delayed by a continuing reluctance on the part of the borough council to lop trees. Four remain at Leicester, though 33402 has now gone to Northampton and the rest are expected to follow.

Alexander Dennis Pointers 42892/3 (VX54 MUU/V) complete the balance of the recent order.

More Mercedes-Benz Vario 0814/Plaxton Beaver 2 sent to First Devon & Cornwall are 52519/50/2 (S519/50/2 RWP).

First York FG

New B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban DP43F 69000-4 (YK54 ENPL/-O) are in service, displacing bus-seated 66711-5 (YK04 EZJ/L/G/M/H) to First West Yorkshire. Volvo B7L/Hispano Habit B40F demonstrator BX03 OVZ remains on loan.

Fishwick, Leyland

Ex-Lothian Leyland Olympians 32-4 (F352/3/5 WSC) have been converted to single door with little imagination, as the former door area is simply panelled without a window, creating a luggage compartment with no extra seating.

Leyland National 2 9 (WRN 412V) has been withdrawn for scrap following accident damage.

Focus, Much Hoole, Lancs

The latest addition to this fleet for preservation is former Hants & Dorset Bristol REL6G/ECW DP50F UEL 564J. Managing director Darren Critchley (Unit 4, Longton Business Park, Much Hoole, Preston PR4 5LE, e-mail darrenjcritchley@aol.com) plans to restore it to National Bus Company poppy red/white local coach livery and would appreciate photographs or history of this vehicle.

Ford, Althorne, Essex

The last remaining Daimler, former Partridge, Hadleigh Fleetline CRG6LX/33 PRG 134J, has gone for scrap. PRG 127J remains in a field to the rear of the yard but will probably be removed for scrap. The last two Bristols owned, ECW-bodied VRT/SL3s AUD 460R and XNV 882S have been sold to APT, Rayleigh, having been in stock for a respectable 15 and 14 years respectively. Plaxton-bodied Bedford EYH 693V has also gone for scrap, to a Barnsley dealer.

Geldard, Leeds

Former Merseybus MCW Metrobus MkIs F814/25 YLV have been painted in yellow schoolbus livery.

GHA Coaches, Corwen

Up to seven vehicles have been acquired from the

Stagecoach flood-damaged fleet at Carlisle, via a dealer. They include Leyland Olympian/Alexander RL-types K130 DAO, P274 VPN and Volvo B10M-55/Alexander PS-types K771/81 DAO.

Meanwhile ex-Stagecoach East Midlands Leyland Olympian C330 HWJ, acquired some years ago in a heavily cannibalised state is back in one piece in yellow Student Transport livery.

Glenvale Transport, Liverpool

Eight ex-Metroliner Dennis Dart/Northern Counties Paladins have been acquired from Ensign, Purfleet (dealer), probably to replace more Leyland Titans, of which only 41 were left by mid-March. The first two are 7142/3 (L118/9 HHV), the latter repainted and named *James*. They are having LED destination displays fitted.

Also here are Dennis Dart/Alexander Dash B40F 7135 (K107 XHG) from Stagecoach Hants & Surrey and Volvo B6-50/Alexander Dash 7298/9 (M678 SSX, L246 CCK) from Stagecoach Western and Stagecoach Transit respectively.

Titans repainted and named are 2073 (CUL 73V) *Phyllis*, 2464 (KYV 464X) *Chloe-Louise*, 2552 (NUW 552Y) *Ellie Jessica*, 2692 (OHV 692Y) *Agnes*.

Titans 2101/47 (CUL 101/47V) 2255/88 (GYE 255W, KYN 288X) 2301 (KYV 301X), 2463/89 (KYV 463/89X), 2695 (OHV 695Y) and MCW Metrobus driver trainer 1180 (B180 WUL) have gone for scrap. Titan 2468 (KYV 468X) is withdrawn.

Glover, Ashbourne, Derbyshire

A third Leyland Lynx is E271 WUB, new to West Riding but purchased from Powell, Hellaby, still wearing its livery.

Golden Line, Smethwick

Mercedes-Benz 811D/Optare StarRider F920 YWY has been acquired for associated City Way Travel.

Go North East GA

Red and yellow-liveried articulated Mercedes-Benz Citaro/AB49D demonstrator BX54 EBC has been on loan at Go Gateshead at Sunderland Road and was used on comparative trials with a Wright Solar Fusion-bodied Scania L94UA on service X66 (Gateshead-MetroCentre).

Volvo B6/Alexander Dash 8413/6 (L413/6 KEF) are reinstated. Optare MetroRider 414 (P414 VRG) and Volvo B6s 8405/25 (L405 GDC, M425 PVN) have been sold.

Grant Palmer, Dunstable

Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D H390 OHK has had vinyls applied advertising Luton-area bus routes. Following the abrupt loss of Buckinghamshire tendered routes 16/17/18 (Aylesbury-Bicester- Buckingham) owing to the withdrawal of funding, ex-Rossendale Volvo B10M/Duple buses F338/9 VSD purchased specifically for these services were surplus to requirements. However, these soon found new work on newly won Bedfordshire tendered routes around Leighton Buzzard.

LDV minibus M699 AOJ was acquired in mid-December from now-defunct Ambassador Line, Dunstable and has been prepared for service.

Halifax Bus Company

The previous red, light grey and brown fleet livery has been abandoned in favour of all-over cherry red, Ford Transit B16 TGV — still numbered 24 — being one of the first to be painted thus. B19 TJW does not carry a fleetnumber but is surely 19 in practice.

Ford Transits are increasingly uncommon in passenger service these days, yet this operator can still muster 22: 1-9 (TJ1 9143, B2-6 TGV, TJ1 9147/8, B9 TJW; F817 XUG, F419 EVU, D121 PTT, H68 BKM, F345 ONO, H553 EVM, C63 LHL, H192 EKN, H847 AUS), 11/2/4/5 and '19' (B11 TJW etc; G299 PKN, D554/3 NOE, H188/1 EHA, D527 HNW, L868 LFS), 20/3-5 (B20 TJW, B261 MDL; N703 FSM; B16 TGV, N704 FSM; N705 FSM) and un-numbered M307 TFR. Bodywork on the Transit fleet is quite varied — by Dormobile, Steedrive, Metalcraft, Crystal, Made-to-Measure and UVG and 20 is one of the rarest open-toppers in the country — an open-top minibus, used formerly at Ventnor by Southern Vectis.

Halifax Joint Committee

Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus 85 (K985 CBO) is allocated to the Tesco supermarket free service in Brighouse and as a result is rarely seen in Halifax. Two further MCW Metrobuses withdrawn are 48 and 63 (LOA 408X, KYV 763X).

Harrogate & District BL

Eight of Burnley & Pendle's Volvo B7TL/Plaxton Presidents are expected to transfer here to displace Volvo Olympians 2954/6-6/63/4 (S54 VNM etc) to Keighley & District. The West Yorkshire Information Service points out that Olympians 408/9 (L8, 9 YCL) are not bound for Keighley, nor are Volvo B10B/Alexander Striders 504/8-10 to be replaced by B10BLEs from Yorkshire Coastliner.

Harpur, Derby

A sixth MCW Metrobus here is ex-Go North East MkII C756 OCN.

Hedingham Omnibuses, Essex

An acquisition is former London Central Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties H47/27D R273 LGH.

This operator is continuing to mop up services discarded, the latest being to resume abandoned Network Colchester route 3 (Hythe-Tesco-Longridge-Town) from 14 March on a commercial basis on weekdays. Hedingham has been running former Network Colchester 4 (Town-Westlands-Tollgate) since 10 January.

Heritage Travel, Shoreham-by-Sea

An acquisition is Roe-bodied Leyland Olympian CAP 270Y (HIL 3455, CUB 72Y) via Stephenson, Rochford (dealer).

Holloway, Scunthorpe

Mercedes-Benz Vito M8 FX54 WFL is new here. Acquisitions are Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/ECW H45/32F A142 MRN from Blazefield Holdings and from unconfirmed source, Dennis Javelin/Plaxton C53F PAH 524 (R452 BND).

continued overleaf...

Below: Alexander PS-bodied Volvo B10M-55 K772 DAO is one of the flood-damaged Stagecoach buses that GHA Coaches intends to refurbish for further service. CHRIS CLEGG



REGISTRATION NOTES

In their latest quarterly report, **DAVID STANIER** and **ROBERT WILLIAMS** cast more light on numberplate developments

In Northern Ireland, **Enniskillen** has completed the sequence AIL to YIL, which Fermanagh County Council began in 1966 and which had reached AIL 9401 when Enniskillen LVLO took over in January 1974. Around the turn of the year, it began issuing AIG registrations. Other recent new series are at **Armagh** (OLZ), **Belfast** (BEZ) and **Omagh** (GHZ).

Former mainland British local authority marks continue to pop up occasionally. For instance, **Nottingham** is still issuing one-time Derby series MCH-D, now in the 900s. In 1966, I recorded MCH 5xxD as the 'high' before MRC-E appeared in January 1967.

Progress through **Q-series** continues slowly and not

all offices have Q allocations. **Chelmsford** has followed Q-NAR with Q-RAR, while **Bangor** has followed Q-KCC with Q-LCC. Both are surprising developments as there were relatively few issues of the superseded series.

The allocation of age-related marks maintains the sequence of reversed Uxx series. UXF, UXH, UXJ and UXK have been allocated around the country, usually in blocks of 100.

In response to an enquiry from Tom Johnson about the **current system**, it is worth noting that, besides the numerous marks held back for Select sales (*Buses* February), several other local identifying prefixes have yet to appear. This suggests that there is still a good

deal of capacity to cope with ever increasing numbers of new vehicles on our roads. **DJS**

The old registration system lent itself well to bus and coach operators' needs. Numbers could be requested to match fleet numbers and, quite often, particular combinations of letters were associated with particular operators, e.g. HA for Midland Red. As the new system is

alphabetic rather than numeric, large operators rely more on fleet numbers for vehicle identification. However, many smaller operators have retained some personalisation either by obtaining their own standard registrations or, as is becoming more common, having dealers register their new vehicles.

Park's of Hamilton completely ignores the new system and transfers a collection of SK registrations on a regular basis. Other operators make similar use of Northern Ireland or other old mainland British registrations.

Several operators have risen to the challenge of the new system. Pulham Coaches recently took delivery of GL54 PUL. Mayne's of Buckie has all new vehicles' registrations ending in GSM, with the first two letters being the initials of a family member (e.g. SM54 GSM). Both of these examples can be spotted as personalised registrations because they share the same last letter of each section.

Other operators make it less easy. On the face of it, AD05 OCT on the latest double-decker for Delaine of Bourne is a standard Peterborough issue that would seem routine for that operator. However, all the company's recent new vehicles have OCT registrations. More obvious personalisation can be seen on Banstead Coaches' CH05 BAN, notionally a Welsh issue but obviously one specially selected. Similarly, Bluebird of Middleton has MX54 BLU. This is subtler, as MX is a Manchester and Merseyside issue, Bluebird's local office. **REW**



Left: Nominally a Newcastle mark, NA04 GHA on this Optare Solo SlimLine of GHA Coaches in North Wales is identifiable as a Select registration for two reasons. The most obvious is because the last three letters match the fleetname, but also because NA and GHA both end with the same letter. This bus began life as a demonstrator registered YN04 XZB. **LES LONG**

All other Plaxton-bodied Javelins have been re-registered, G108 JNP becoming 805 YKL, H231 FFE is YYR 832, M162 KAT is PSV 436, M887 WAK is 100 FH, N942 EWG is PAH 984 and F92 WFA is as yet unconfirmed. Roe-bodied Olympian BPF 133Y has been scrapped.

Holmes, Clay Cross

Orders here will call for a 25-seat Optare Solo SlimLine for Derbyshire County Council contract service 158 (Asker Lane-Bonsall) if this is successfully won again, and a 20-seat Mercedes-Benz Sprinter.

In place of Mercedes-Benz 814D/Autobus Classique L410 RCT sold to Western Commercials, Newbridge (dealer), Mercedes-Benz Vario 0814/Plaxton Beaver 2 DP33F YN54 XXP has arrived, for service 113 (Belper-Ashbourne). Vario SK52 SRZ has become a reserve vehicle, but is often busy on school contracts.

Crystal-converted Mercedes-Benz 410D J639 OPF is due for imminent withdrawal.

Hornsby, Ashby, Lincs

A second Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Dart here is FX54 LLE.

Below: Keighley & District 803 (KL52 LZX) is one of two ex-Sovereign Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart SLF 37-seaters providing additional capacity on part of the Zone network. **JAMES LAWRENCE**



Hoverspeed, Dover

While late-build Leyland National 2s C452/4 OAP have been relegated to reserve, an acquisition is of early Mk1 LN1151/2R/0403/B25D WFM 815L (NIL 7247, WFM 815L, CAP 15, WFM 815L) new to Crosville but most recently with Johnson, Newingreen.

Hunter, Leeds

YN54 XSR is a new BMC Probus 850 Club/C35F supplied by Cooper, Killamarsch (dealer).

Ipswich Buses

DAF DB250/Optare Spectra 50 (P442 SWX) has been repainted into latest white and green livery following accident damage.

J-Line, Smethwick

Another well-travelled Dennis Dart 8.5SDL3003/Carlyle Dartline B28F new to London United is G56 TGW (481 EXO, G56 TGW, SIL 1573, G56 TGW), operated most recently by Trustline, Hunsdon.

Mercedes Benz 811D/Reeve Burgess Beaver H418 FGS has been reinstated but Plaxton-bodied L950/2 MBH have passed to Stafford Bus Centre (dealer).

Keighley & District BL

Again, apologies that some of the reports here last month, received in good faith from a good source, appear not to have been quite right. The West Yorkshire Information Service points out that the vehicles shown as being replaced by the forthcoming B7RLEs are schoolbuses and Volvo B6s — still needed in the fleet — will not be replaced. Instead, vehicles to be replaced will be Volvo B10B/Alexander Striders 502/3 and Volvo B10BLEs 521/2/6/7/9, 545-51, 530/1 are to stay, and while some of the vehicles may be sold to Traction Group, they certainly won't be going just yet.

Acquisitions from Sovereign are Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B37F 803/4 (KL52 LZX, KG52 VAA) — the only long-wheelbase Darts in passenger service with BlazeField. They have been fitted with Mobitec LED electronic destinations and wear Zone livery. Their capacity is being put to good use on Zone routes, especially Bracken Bank.

The others transferred north from Herts are Mini Pointer Dart B29F X579/81 MBH, stored initially at Burnley & Pendle, repainted by Lancashire United and will gain fleet livery and Mobitec displays.

The new Volvo B7TLs are expected to oust 14 B10Bs (521/2/40-51) and the Northern Counties-bodied Volvo Olympians are to stay in service here until the summer. Also expected during the summer as well as the four Alexander Royale-bodied Olympians from Lancashire United are Northern Counties-bodied 2954/6-9/63/4 (S54 VNM etc) currently with Harrogate & District.

Withdrawn Volvo B6 653 was the last to wear the 'big K' —style livery.

West Yorkshire Information Service also advises that only one ex-Sovereign London Dart is here for training — 542 (V542 JBH), not as shown last month. The Dennis Javelin trainer it replaces is 162 (L101 SDY), not 163 (L103 SDY), which was sold last year; it will go to Harrogate & District.

K-Line, Honley, W Yorks

A recent acquisition is DAF SB120/Wright B39F YJ51 ELO from Stephenson, Tholthorpe. Mercedes-Benz 413CDI/M16 YX04 KTU is numbered 4 here.

Kimes, Folkingham, Lincs

The ex-Go North East vehicles acquired, WAZ 8278, TAZ 4061 (G675/9 TCN), are Alexander H45/29F-bodied Leyland Olympians, not Scania as reported last month.

Konectbus, Dereham

Optare Excel S171 UAL has green branding for the Costessey Park-&-Ride contract in Norwich. Leyland National 120 (DAR 120T) has been withdrawn.

Lancashire United BL

Further to last month, it seems just seven Volvo B7TLs will come here from Burnley & Pendle for the 152 (Blackburn-Preston).

Lloyd, Bagillt

The schoolbus fleet currently comprises Dennis Dominators A747/48 GFY, Leyland Olympian/ECW CWR 527Y, A683/5 MWX, B151 TRN, C114 CHM, C210 GTU, C963 XVC, D129/30 FYM, Olympian/Roe A139/40 DPE, A148/50 FPG, Leyland National Greenway JIL 2161 and Leyland Tigers B104 KPF, E927 PBE, F278 HOD. A685 MWX, C114 CHM, C963 XVC, D129/30 FYM and E927 PBE are in yellow and F278 HOD in Flintshire Linxx livery

London Central/ London General GA

Yet another articulated Mercedes-Benz Citaro caught fire while on the 436, and appeared on BBC TV evening news on 14 March. Damage was confined to the engine compartment this time.

The doored AEC Routemaster, DRM2516 (WLT 516 JJD 516D), is out of service and is to be replaced by RML2283 (CUV 283C) in the commercial services fleet. Its doors have been donated to its replacement. Meanwhile RML894 (WLT 894) has been re-registered 787 UXA.

Routemasters RM478, 687, 758/87, 2022 (WLT 478, 202/9 UXJ WLT 687, 758, WLT 787, ALM 22B) and Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties NV73, 102/69 (R273 LGH, P902 RYO, R369 LGH) have been sold to Ensignbus (dealer), Purfleet; NV73 is with Heddingham Omnibuses and 169 with Mullaney, Watford

London Hoppa, Stansted

Another larger vehicle at work is MAN/Marcopolo T180 SUT. Meanwhile, on loan from AR Travel, Hemel Hempstead is Volkswagen Sprinter/Autobus W7 ART.

Loonat, Batley, W Yorks

Ex-Bebb, Llantwit Fardre Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton Paragon Expressliner C49Ft Y97 HTX is here.

Lowe, Hucknall, Notts

Leyland Lynx F606 UVN has been acquired, joining Leyland National 2s MDS 868V and LUA 324V.

Maddy, Michaelchurch Escley, Herefordshire

Optare Solo YN04 LXR is in use.

MASS, North Anston

Leyland Titans CUL 186V, GYE 264W, KYV 378X and A893, 985 SYE have migrated to Finningley from Grantham, while Finningley-based Leyland Tiger 127 went to Grantham before that operation closed and Leyland Olympians 155/6/65 are stored at North Anston. Tigers 120/33, Olympians 161/3 and Optare MetroRider N268 XOJ are to be broken up.

Metrobus GA

The following vehicles were taken over with Tellings-Golden Miller's Dartford operations (News last month): Optare Solos 192-9 (YJ51 JWW, Y293-6 PDN, W427/41/2 CWX), 201 (SN03 WKU) —192 is B29F, 197 B30F and the rest are B27F; Dennis Dart SLF/Caetano Nimbus B32D 220-3 (KX04 HRD-G), Mercedes-Benz 711D/Crystals B19FL 397 (P347 HKU) and Mercedes 411CDi Sprinter B16F 398/9 (BU04 UTN/P).

Former 850 (S850 DGX) is one of two Volvo Olympian/East Lancs Pyoneers sold to Bus Éireann for use as open-toppers.

Metroline DG

An unusual order calls for five short Optare Solo SlimLines for Harrow services H1-3, due in the summer. Alexander Dennis Enviro200 demonstrator SN54 GRU has been working route 214 (Highgate Village- Liverpool Street). Park Royal depot is to be closed by the end of May.

Mike's Travel, Thornbury

Rather late in the day perhaps, the Leyland Tiger/Duple Laser combination has proved so successful here that another has arrived, TRCTL11/3R/C57F XEC 347Y, (RJI 5701, XEC 347Y, ESU 554, ANA 52Y) new to Greater Manchester Transport, most recently with Hookways, Meeth.

MK Metro SG

Two more new Optare Solos are due as 26/7, while Solo 2 (S402 ERP) has been on loan to Choice, Willenhall since mid-January.

An acquisition is DAF SB120/Wright Cadet 61 (YN52 CMU) from Cumbrae Coaches, arriving in immaculate condition having clocked up low mileage with its previous owner. Allocated to Wolverton, it wears the orange/blue livery carried by similar Cadets 59 and 60 and is branded for service 5.

Dennis Dart/Carlyle 401/4 (H101, 94 MOB) have been sold to Stafford Bus Centre (dealer). The withdrawal of school contract 611 in mid-February led to dedicated vehicle 141 (M53 PRA) being sold to Centrebus for use at Grantham on services acquired from MASS Transit.

A Homebase superstore is nearing completion on the large site of the former depot at Winterhill, opened in 1982 and vacated in 2002. It never fulfilled its purpose as a regional centre for the National Bus Company and must surely be one of the youngest UK garage sites to be demolished for redevelopment.

Morley, Whitlesey, Cambs

Leyland Titan WYV 48T has been withdrawn and cannibalised and Bedford YNT/Duple HBH 411Y has also been retired, while Bedford YRT/Plaxton Supreme SPA 192R is for sale.

Moxon, Oldcotes, Notts

Acquired are Leyland Olympian/ECW A630/1 WDT from Yorkshire Traction, the latter repainted in a new style livery, also applied to Bristol VRT/SL3/ECW RUA 450W. Leyland Atlantean/Alexander VFT 199T and Bristol VRT/ECW DNG 233T are withdrawn.

MR Travel, Rochdale

Ex-Harrogate & District Dennis Javelin/Plaxton B60F L138/9 BFV are in stock.

Mullaney, Watford

A mixed selection of vehicles acquired via Ensignbus (dealer), Purfleet, comprises former Go North East Cummins-engined Leyland Olympian/ECW H45/32F B734GCN, ex-Metrobus Dennis Dart/Plaxton B40F J986 JNJ (new to Brighton & Hove) and Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties H47/27D R369 LGH (latterly a London Central driver trainer). Ensign has bought former East Kent MkII MCW Metrobus F761 EKM.

National Express NX

Birmingham-London NXL Shuttle service Scania/Irizar PB coach NXL9 (YN04 GPF) was reliveried to mark St Patrick's Day on 17 March in a green version of corporate livery with shamrocks in place of the usual red and blue circles.

Network Colchester TGM

DAF SB220/Ikarus 359 (K124 TCP) has been reinstated but defective Dennis Dart 313 (N543 TPK) and Leyland Lynx 352 (H252 GEV) are stored out of use.

Volvo B10M/Van Hool R10, 20 TGM have been reregistered CSU 908/9 respectively. Scania K113CRB/Van Hool C44Ft 4352/3 (M52/3 AWW) have returned to Arriva, though to the Shires & Essex rather than Southern Counties.

Newport Transport

Scania N113CRB/Alexander Strider 72 (L172 EKG) is the second vehicle in overall cream with just a green skirt after 92, but, unlike 72, it has green window surrounds and this livery is expected to become standard for these vehicles. Alexander-bodied Scania N113DRB/Alexander 143/4 (F43/4 YHB) have passed to Northern Blue, Burnley.

NJ Travel, Rushey Mead

A recent acquisition is Dennis Dominator/East Lancs C719 NCD from Bellamy, Nottingham, which has replaced MCW Metrobus GYE 565W, sold to Thurmaston Bus.

Nip-On, St Helens

VDL SB120/Wright Cadet MV54 AOC/D are in use on service 97 (St Helens-Prescot). An acquisition from Nottingham City Coaches is Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton C53F T783 LCH.

Norbus, Kirkby

Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer W772 URP is an acquisition and is notable as it has been converted to run on bio-diesel fuel — promotional lettering on the vehicle claims it will do '725 miles to the acre'.

Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton T831 PNF has passed to Atherton, Abingdon, similar V260/5 BNV to D&G, Great Kingstone.

Norfolk Green, King's Lynn

Ex-Stagecoach South Dennis Dart/Alexander Dash K567 NHC has been noted in service, still in Stagecoach stripes. Senior vehicle, Mercedes-Benz 709D 309 (E829 ATT) was still active in January.

North West Travel, Liverpool

Former Ulsterbus Leyland Lynx/Alexander N-type HX1 3009 has been repainted into a maroon and cream livery similar the former MTL scheme. While its repaint was taking place, its normal Wirral duties were carried on by the company's former East Yorkshire DAF DB250/Optare Spectra.

Nottingham City Transport

New Optare Alero 899 (YN54 LLC) is in turquoise with yellow front and is on loan from Nottingham City Council for service 195 (City-Wollaton Park), where the combination of narrow roads and parked cars precludes the use of the Optare Solo normally allocated.

The last Leylands on fleet strength, East Lancs-bodied Olympians 481/2 (K481/2 GNN) and, similarly-bodied Volvo Olympians 483/4 (L483/4 LNN) have been sold to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) leaving only East Lancs-bodied Volvo Olympians 490-3 (P490/1 CVO, P492/3 FRR) and Alexander PS type-bodied Volvo B10Ms 767-9 (N767-9 WRC) in South Notts livery. 481 is with Castle Buses, Liverpool.

The replacement of South Notts livery thus ends 79 years of blue and cream buses on Gotham-Nottingham and later Nottingham-Loughborough (currently service 1). A variation of the two-tone green Nottingham Network scheme is being used. Scania L113/East Lancs Flytes 640/2 (P640/2 ENN), have navy blue 'South Notts' branding in the same style as white Pathfinder-branded vehicles. 490-3 are also to gain this livery, as they are not due to be withdrawn for another three years, as are four Dennis Trident/East Lancs Lolyne from red Go2 circular services 44/45 (City-Colwick-Netherfield-Mapperley) with the arrival of the next batch of Scania N94UD OmniDekka/East Lancs.

Volvo B10M Citybus/East Lancs Pyoneer coaches 336-8/46 (R336-8 RRA, FE02 AKX) are not overall cream as reported earlier, at least 336 retaining cream/green, albeit no longer with Nottingham City Coaches fleetnames. However, 338 has been sold to Ensign and has remained in Nottingham, with Silverdale Coaches.

Olympian, Harlow

Acquired is Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer B35F K714 KGU. Unused and cannibalised ex-Buzz Co-Operative Marshall Minibus R108 VLX has gone for scrap. Further coaches sold to Mentor, Rotherham (dealer) are Bovas MUI 5952/4,

continued overleaf...

Below: National Express Irizar PB-bodied Scania K-series NXL9 in the special St Patrick's Day livery that honours Birmingham's Irish community. TONY HUNTER



Iveco EuroRider/Beulas P161 FBC. Already sold to Mentor were Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premieres K19, 20 CCL and Premiere-bodied Dennis Javelins P421/5-7 JDT have gone.

Owens, Four Crosses

New is BMC 1100FE/DP70F schoolbus BX54 VUE.

Oxford Bus Company GA

Scania coach 50 (YN04 YJA) continues on loan in overall blue with airline vinyls. Mercedes-Benz Citaros 825-7 are to be repainted into local bus livery to increase capacity on service 400, so Dennis Tridents 103-5 will revert to green Park-&Ride livery. A decision on the future of Volvo B10B-58/Plaxton Verde 614 (N614 PJO) is awaited after fire damage sustained on Boxing Day.

Pegasus.com, Guiseley, W Yorks

New for this successor company to Aztecbird are Optare Solo M1020/B29F YJ54 BVA-C for service 737 (Bradford/Leeds-Bradford Airport). Solo M850/B29F YN53 ELW came from Aztecbird.

Pete's Travel, West Bromwich

A fifth former Metroliner Dennis Dart is 9.8SDL3040/Plaxton Pointer B39F M101 BLE. Optare Solo Y867 PWT is in yellow fleet livery rather than Coventry Park-&Ride maroon and cream. Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton Beaver 2 R937 AMB has gone to Rapsons, Inverness.

Preston Bus

The 10 Leyland Olympian/Alexander RH-types from Lothian are to be numbered 123-32 (E323-32 MSG), rather than 323-32. Northern Counties-bodied Olympian 132 (F32 AHG) has been renumbered 100. It is expected that the Olympians will replace a mix of Leyland Atlanteans and Lynxes; indeed, Atlanteans 158/9/68/70 (OBV 158/9X, URN 168/70Y) have been sold to an Inverness operator. That leaves the Atlantean fleet as 142/3 (UHG 142/3V), 152/65 (GBV 152W, OBV 165X) and 172-7 (URN 172Y, DRN 173-7Y).

In course of repairing accident damage, Lynx 215 (G215 KRN) has been converted from DP45F to B51F with seatbelts for a new school contract. Optare MetroRider 5 (M405 TCK) has been sold to Town & Around, Purfleet. 1, 3, 4, 6-8 (M401 TCK, etc) remain stored here. No buses are currently on order, including for the new Orbit service. Funding issues mean also that Gamull Lane service 11 won't get its dual-fuel double-deckers, but diesel low-floor single-deckers — of type yet to be decided — will be bought instead.

Procter, Leeming

New Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Dart 08 (MX05 ENE) is in the Dales & District fleet for Ripon city services.

Raddoneur, Birkenhead

Another MAN 14.220/MCV Stirling is AE54 JPY.

Reading Transport

New Scania L94UB/Wright Solar B43F 1001-12 (YN05 GX/A/B/D/C/E-H/J/M/O/L) entered service on 7 March as planned; similar 1013-20 are due in June, and to help out until then Scania OmniCity B42F demonstrator YN54 OBA is in service, numbered 1000.

Below: Reading Transport 974 (SK52 USS), its ex-demonstrator TransBus Enviro300, in the charcoal/beige generic livery also worn by one of the new Wright-bodied Scania in the fleet. BEN MORROLL



Driver training Leyland Olympians 311/3 (E911/3 DRD) see more passenger use during the peaks and revert to their intended role in between. Daytrack/Nighttrack DAF DB250/Optare Spectras 738/9 (YG02 FWB/C) now operate on town services, still in basic Daytrack/Nighttrack livery, having been cascaded from Nighttrack duties following service changes in February. Quality Route 17 now runs throughout the night, replacing some of the Nighttrack routes.

The 20 Optare Excels mentioned last month sailed from Southampton for New Zealand on board *MV Tampa* (12 buses) and *MV Tarago* (eight). Excel 931 (S931 LBL) has been repainted into Loddon Bridge Park-&Ride livery.

The rebuilding of fire damaged Leyland Titan 79 (RMO 79Y) has been abandoned; it and 71 (RMO 71Y) together with Optare MetroRider 614 (M614 NRD) have been stripped for parts and await removal for scrap. 79 has been replaced in the Goldline fleet by Mk1 MCW Metrobus 193 (LMO 193X), which is expected to retain its commemorative livery for the foreseeable future. The Goldline double-deckers also operate town services when not required for contracts or hires.

Reading's MkII Metrobus 463 (E463 SON) deputised for 458 of the same batch at Newbury between 2-12 March.

Red Kite, Tilsworth, Beds

A twice-weekly Aberystwyth-Manchester express service has started, using former Premier, Newton Abbott Mercedes-Benz O303/Jonckheere Jubilee C49Ft TJI 5843 (A17 ETS, 3653 RE, 203 YKX, A126 SNH).

Most operators are withdrawing Bedfords but two more have been added here, from Rambler, Hastings — Plaxton bus-bodied D123 EFH (PDY 42) and Duple-bodied coach C538 OTY. These join YNT/Plaxton E22 XHL, another ex-Rambler vehicle acquired in 2004. These arrivals have replaced Bedford YMT/Plaxton Supreme JFL 729W new in 1981 as the Peterborough United team coach.

The double-deck fleet has been expanding too. Volvo B10M Citybus/East Lancs G619/20 BPH are here from Arriva Southern Counties, their large capacity needed for school contracts — both have been repainted in 'Rambler' style green and cream. They join ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian A576 NWX acquired in mid-2004 from Arriva North West & Wales, in Go North East-style livery adopted for service buses after the purchase of a large number of JTY-X Olympians in 2000.

Redroute Buses, Northfleet

Ex-Reading Buses MCW Metrobus MkII B149 EDP is acquired, rejoining B148 EDP here, and Leyland National VIB 8319 has come from Imperial, Rainham and retains its green livery.

Optare MetroRiders G778/9 WFC are acquisitions from Emsworth & District, new to City of Oxford, while MCW MetroRider F60 RFS is being cannibalised. Ex-East Kent Leyland Tiger/Plaxton FKK 842Y and Leyland Leopards BHO 442V and MCY 188M are in schoolbus yellow. Dennis Dart/Alexander Dash J534 GCD has been sold after little, if any, use.

Regal Busways, Chelmsford

Optare Solo M780 SlimLine Demonstrator YJ54 BTE was evaluated on all routes during February. It was numbered 301 for its stay.

TransBus Mini Pointer Darts 601/2 (YN04 PZY/Z) were

sent away to be fitted with new Lazzerini high-back seats. To cover for their absence, Solo MX03 YDF was on loan, numbered 302. After operating for two years in London United red/grey, Dennis Dart 505 (J105 DUV) wears a revised style of the rich maroon/cream fleet livery.

Marshall-bodied Volvo B6 L660 MFL has been cannibalised.

Road Car YT

DAF SB220/Optare Delta 250 has been delicensed following accident damage and has gone to Barnsley Central Works for repairs, but accident damaged Scania/Plaxton 279 is back in service.

Roberts, Hugglescote, Leics

Ex-Travel West Midlands MCW Metrobus MkII B791 AOC is one of two here.

Ross, Featherstone, W Yorks

Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton B31F 2 (YK04 ENN) is in use.

Rossendale Transport

Optare MetroRider 13 (L813 KCW) has been withdrawn following an accident. Dennis Dart/Carylfe 90/1 (H130/1 MOB) have been sold.

Safeguard, Guildford

A new addition is Volvo B12M/Plaxton Paragon C53F YN05 HUY.

Shamrock, Pontypridd

Acquired via auction is Leyland Atlantean/Alexander H45/37F UJI 8218 (SCN 271S) ex-2 Travel, Pentrechwyth, while a more recent Leyland from Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) is ex-London ECW-bodied Olympian D241 FYM, in use at Llandow. Dennis Darts K989/92 CBO and K861 PCN are in service at Llandow in 2 Travel livery while ex-Phoenix Dart H116 THE has received Thomas of Barry livery but is still in store. Other former 2 Travel vehicles are Optare MetroRiders K966/7 HUB at Abercynon.

The six East Lancs-bodied Scania are allocated to Pyle (V304 EAK, W302 MKY), Llandow (V307/9 EAK), Newport (W301 MKY) and Abercynon (W303 MKY).

Mercedes-Benz/Robin Hood C25F R183 EOT has gone to Hilton, Newton-le-Willows. Volvo B10M/Berkhof Axial R916/21 ULA to Mentor, Hellaby (dealer). Former Pyle-based Leyland Titan OHV 775Y went for scrap.

Shearings

Thirty coaches are due this season, numbered 701-30 and replacing the last remaining vehicles in the 8xx and 9xx series. Volvos 601-4 now wear Premier Class livery.

Silverdale, Nottingham

New coaches reported are Volvo B12(M or B?)/Caetano Enigma FJ05 HYG/H. Also here is former Nottingham City Transport Volvo Citybus/East Lancs Pyoneer DPH47/35F R338 RRA.

Sleafordian, Sleaford

A second Dennis Dominator/Northern Counties is B912 TVR from Stagecoach Manchester and noted in use on service 609 (Sleaford-Grantham) on 19 January.

Snaith, Otterburn, Northumberland

Two new Plaxton-bodied Volvos are the third B12M/Paragon for the fleet and a B7R/Profile C70F, the first of its kind here.

Solent Blue Line

As illustrated in last month's News section, all-Leyland Olympian 731 (H731 DDL) has been refurbished in Blue Star livery with upgraded seating and electronic destination displays. Mellor-bodied Ivecos 242/56 (M242 XPO, N256 ECR) have gone to Island Motor Salvage, Rookley, Isle of Wight, for scrap.

South Gloucester, Patchway

Ex-Dunn Line Volvo B6LE/Wright Crusader B40F S583 VOB has been acquired.

South Lancs, Atherton

Two Optare Solo M950s were expected in March. Mellor-bodied Iveco 59.12 P248 KNB has passed to Holt, Bolton (dealer).

Springfield, Wigan

Volvo B6/Alexander Dash L418 JBD and Optare MetroRider J621 HHM are in use.



Left: Safeguard's new Plaxton Paragon-bodied Volvo B12M coach. ANDREW HALLIDAY

Stagecoach East ST

Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton 52445/52 (R455 FCE, R552 JDF) have been transferred from Stagecoach North West. Ex-London Dennis Darts 34139/40 are not coming here, but Plaxton Pointer-bodied 34158/60 (V158/60 MVK) are.

Stagecoach East Midlands ST

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointers 32066 (M59 VJO), 32713 (K713 PCN) and Mercedes-Benz 811D/Alexander 41714/6 (J214/6 AET) have come from Stagecoach North East. Former Stagecoach Western Volvo B10M-60/Plaxton Paramount 3500 III C51F 52079 (WLT 874) is in use as a driver trainer painted white with red lettering.

The future of Volvo B10M-55/Alexander 20439 (L339 KCK) is in the balance following an engine fire and rear-end damage when it was hit by the fire appliance sent to deal it.

Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) has taken Leyland Olympians 14321 and 14915 (A321 YWJ, E915 KYR) and Volvo B6 30451 (L451 LWA); Lister, Bolton (dealer) took Dennis Dominators 15007/8 (B904/7 TVR), Mercedes-Benz 40768 (N768 EWG) and B10Ms 52009/10 (SKY 31/2Y).

Stagecoach London ST

In early March, East London had new Alexander Dennis Trident/ALX400 H45/23D 18266-77 (LX05 BVY/Z, BWA-H/J/K) at work on route 158.

Scania N113CRL/Wright Pathfinder 28618 (RDZ 6118), now a rather stylish driver trainer, has been repainted in purple training livery with purple wheels.

AEC Routemasters RML2429/70/88/95, 2592 (JJD 429D etc), RML2748 (SMK 748F) were wrecked in the Carlisle floods and are to be scrapped.

Stagecoach Manchester ST

As reported in News this month, the business of Dennis's of Dukinfield was taken over on 1 April. Buses acquired for further use here were Dennis Dart SLF/East Lancs Spryte B37F Y951/2 XRN; Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B37F P547 HVM, P978-80 LNB and P112/3 OJA; similar B36F-seated R572/3 ABA and T965 PVR; B39F-seated R574/5 ABA, R103 BDB, T63 AUA; TransBus Pointer Darts MX04 AXN/P/R; and Dennis Trident/East Lancs Lolyne H51/31F W531 GCW, X792/3 JHG and MW02 UJE/F. Also acquired but unlikely to be retained are Dennis Dart 9.8SDL/Wright Handybus B40F (new to Go-Ahead Northern) J606 JCU, J951/2 MFT, K857/65 PCN, K366/8/9 RTY.

The Neoplan Skyliners for Megabus.com services are now expected to be 50147-9 (MX05 BWL/M/O) rather than 50146-8. They are CH65/24DT—apparently, two of the seats are for crew use only.

Nomadic original Megadekka three-axle Leyland Olympians 14239/40 (WLT 727/94 F201/2 FHH) arrived at Hyde Road from Scotland during March and are to be used here for their second stint as Magic Buses. Ex-Hong Kong Leyland Olympians 13640-2/50 are registered G283 YRJ, H617/25/7 LNA. However 13640/9 have gone to Bluebird in exchange for 14239/40, leaving just 13639/41/2/4/7/50/1 as Magic Buses in Manchester.

Mercedes-Benz Varios 42530/7 (P530/7 PNE) have been reinstated and 42545/59 (P545/59 PNE) transferred to Stagecoach North West. Several Varios have been sold to Fleetlink (dealer) including 42540/2 (P540/2 PNE).

Glossop-based Mercedes-Benz Varios 42530/6/48/63/4 (P530 PNE etc) were withdrawn for disposal following service changes on 3 April.

Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties 13173/6/8/81/5 (C173 YBA etc) have been withdrawn for disposal, while similar 13191 (C191 YBA) is in reserve, 13198 (C198 YBA) is to be used as an engineering audit training vehicle, 13205 (C205 YBA) is to become a driver trainer and 13224/6 (C224 CBU, C226 ENE) have gone to Stagecoach Wales. Newer 13291 (F291 DRJ) has been repainted into training livery as a further addition to this unit. That leaves 13210/2/21 (C210/2/21/4 CBU) in reserve and only four pre F-registration Olympians active, 13215/34/55/77 (C215 YBA, C234 ENE, C255 FRJ, D277 JVR), all at Hyde Road. Correcting last month's report, Olympian 13118 was used only

temporarily as a trainer (for a few days) and has been sold for some time. Dennis Dominator 15023 (B23 TVR) has been sold for scrap to PVS, Barnsley.

Stagecoach North East ST

Ex-Stagecoach East Midlands Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1RH/Northern Counties H47/30F 14901/18 (E901/18 KYR) are at Transit. Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 32133 (K133 SRH) and Alexander-bodied 32637 (P637 PGP) have been refurbished, as has Leyland Olympian/Alexander 14198 (J198 HFR), which is now H41/27F, ex-DPH43/27F.

Olympian/Northern Counties 13022 (A22 HNC), Volvo B10M-55/Alexander 20695 (P315 EFL) have gone to Stagecoach North West. Dart/Plaxton Pointers 32066 (M59 VJO), 32713 (K713 PCN) and Mercedes-Benz 811D/Alexander 41714/6 (J214/6 AET) are at East Midland and Alexander-bodied 709D 40496 (N496 RVK) at Fife. Leyland Titan/Park Royal 10003 (WYV 3T) went to the Living Well Trust, Carlisle.

Stagecoach North West ST

Following the floods at Carlisle, the opportunity is being taken to make all city services low-floor; 39 new buses are being delivered from June replacing the 24 low-floor buses lost in the floods and 15 older ones.

Designline Olymbus 80009 (VX04 MZG) was back here for publicity purposes in January.

Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton 52445/52 (R455 FCE, R552 JDF) have been transferred to Stagecoach East. The immortal Bristol VRT, 15731 (PHH 149W), is the reserve bus for Borrowdale this summer, while a reinstatement of note as a result of the vehicle shortage caused by the Carlisle floods is Leyland Tiger/Duple Dominant bus 25800 (B900 WRN).

The four Magic Bus-liveried B10Ms, 20424/5, 20715/8 (J24/5 MCW, K715/8 DAO) returned to Stagecoach Western. Mercedes-Benz 709D 40081 (K878 GHH) has been sold for scrap. ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians 14175 (C175 ECK), 14945 (A945 HAC), Alexander-bodied Volvo B6 30302 (M742 PRS), Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander 40814 (K614 UFR) have all gone to Wigley, Carlton (dealer) for scrap.

Below: Stagecoach South East's preserved and now 30-year-old Bristol VR 15760 (JOU 160P) awaiting race-goers in Cheltenham town centre on 17 March when it was among the vehicles that Stagecoach West hired over the Gold Cup festival. The VRs behind are Marchant's RUA 452/7W. COLIN MARTIN



Stagecoach Oxford ST

The Designline turbine-electric 80009 (VX04 MZG) operated in service on routes 1, 3, 7 and 10 and also appeared on Brookes Bus services. As it was not fitted with ticket issuing equipment, no fares were charged and it was slotted in as a duplicate.

Ancillary Mercedes-Benz 709D 40162 (N362 AVV) has been withdrawn.

Stagecoach South East ST

No Megabus Neoplan Skyliners are to be allocated here as they are being deployed on longer distance services such as Aberdeen-London.

Ex-Cumberland Volvo Olympian/Alexander 16630 (P230 VCK) is now in service at Aldershot rather than 16632. Reserve Alexander-bodied Darts 32509/48 (J509/48 GCD) remained in service in February, at Portsmouth and Winchester respectively. Scania N113DRB/Northern Counties 15357 (K357 LMK) was the last East Kent vehicle in stripes; it is now in latest livery.

The £1.2 million rebuilding of Havant bus station has been delayed by contamination from diesel fuel, and the 15-month project is expected to start in May.

Bristol VRT 15760 (JOU 160P) has been in service again, though appropriately back in the area to which it was new nearly 30 years ago. It was new to Cheltenham District, and was sent to Cheltenham to help carry the crowds to the National Hunt Festival in March.

Stagecoach Wales ST

Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/Northern Counties H43/30F 13224/6 (C224 CBU, C226 ENE) have been transferred from Stagecoach Manchester.

Two further vehicles on loan to Stagecoach North West at Carlisle are Wright-bodied Dennis Darts 32986/9 (L86/9 CWO).

Volvo B10M-55/Alexander PS-type 20359 (M759 LAX) is the eighth and last of this type to be refurbished to B48F ex-DP48F. The high-backed seats displaced from these vehicles are being used to re-seat other PS-types, 20421 (H621 ACK) now being DP51F ex-B51F and 20811 (N811 DWE) DP49F ex-B49F. East Lancs-rebodied B10M 20001 (A14 RBL B176 FFS) is used in normal passenger service as well as for driver training.

Stagecoach Warwickshire ST

Megabus.com Neoplan Skyliners 50141/2 are expected at Leamington Spa, in place of tri-axe Leyland Olympians 13624/5/25 currently in use.

Volvo B10M-55/Alexander 20557 (P557 ESA) is back from refurbishment and allocated to Leamington, while 20558 (P558 ESA) is undergoing X17 refurbishment.

The last surviving ex-National Bus Company stock here comprises ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians 14932/42-4 (B912 ODU, A542-4 HAC) at Rugby; they are among only 13 vehicles here to retain stripes.

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander 40150 (N350 AVV) has been retrieved from the disposal list to reserve status at Rugby. Mercedes 709D 40146 (M346 KWK) is for disposal at Nuneaton.

continued overleaf...

Stagecoach West ST

Refurbished Volvo B10M 20681 (N401 LDF) re-entered service in March. Leyland Lynx driver trainer 29105 (F105 HVK) has moved from Cheltenham District to Cheltenham & Gloucester. DAF SB220/Optare Delta driver trainer 26019 (J719 CYG) has been re-registered HIL 6075, transferred from withdrawn Dodge Commando trainer 48083.

Cheltenham & Gloucester Leyland Olympian 14292 (LWS 40Y) is delicensed in reserve, while Mercedes-Benz 709D 40735 (N735 RDD) is also in reserve but still licensed.

The annual National Hunt Festival at Cheltenham Racecourse, from 15-18 March, saw Cheltenham District operate its usual special services. Many extra vehicles were hired in, with 65 buses on service at the racecourse on Gold Cup evening. Of particular interest this year was Stagecoach South East's Bristol VRT 15760 (JOU 160P) freshly repainted in Stagecoach stripes; it was new to Cheltenham District in 1975, and was one of seven VRTs used on this operation. Also hired was Stagecoach East Corby Star Scania OmniDekka 15404 (KX04 RDU).

Stephenson, Rochford, Essex

ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian A234 GHN has been stripped for spares.

Stratford Blue EB

TransBus Mini Pointer Dart/B29F KN04 XCU is in Warwickshire green and yellow livery with branding for service X20 (Birmingham-Stratford-upon-Avon).

Stringer, Pontefract

Optare Solo VU02 TTE has been acquired from Brylaine, Boston.

Sullivan, South Mimms

More Dennis Dart SLFs acquired from Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) are former London General Plaxton Pointer B32F-bodied P510/7 RYM.

Sunrise, West Bromwich

A third Optare MetroRider from Pride of the Dales is MR03/B29F J692 CGK.

Supertravel, Speke

New Mercedes-Benz Vario O814/Mellor C33F VX54 CLU is in use. Outgoing Mercedes R3 POW and T85 RJL have passed to Mid West, Staverton.

Tanat Valley, Llanrhaedr-YM

Leyland Olympian/ECW 508 (SHE 308Y) has been reinstated for further service but similar 535 (DBV 135Y) has been sold to Midland Routemaster, Pottersbury. In from Shuttle Bus UK, Ladywood is Volvo B10M-61/Van Hool Alizée C49Ft XNR 876 (CGA 196X).

Tappins, Didcot

Open-top sightseeing Leyland Atlanteans confirmed re-registered are Alexander-bodied 14, 39, 928 (BFS 14, 39L, OSF 928M) to GJZ 9571-3; Roe-bodied 124 (STK 124T) to GJZ 9574; Northern Counties-bodied 217 (UTV 217S) to GJZ 9576; and East Lancs-bodied 549 (OTO 549M) to GJZ 8570. Further to February Fleet News, ex-Dublin Bus Leyland Olympian/Alexander 51-4 (MUI 7851-4) were previously G907/19/51/63 FVX (90 D 1013/4/2/10).

Tellings Golden Miller TGM

As noted last month, Transport for London services from the former Crystals operation at Dartford have passed to Metrobus. At least five of Volvo B10BLE/Alexander ALX300 DP44F 901-7 (W901-7 UJM) are expected to replace coaches at Portsmouth on services X27/X47, following the end of the TFL 726 contract.

Thames Travel, Wallingford

New is allover pink Scania N94UD OmniDekka/East Lancs DPH47/33F 154 (OU54 PGZ).

Theobalds, Luton

Former Arriva Southern Counties Leyland Olympian/Alexander RL H47/32F F580 SMG has been acquired via Ensignbus (dealer), Purfleet.

Thornes Independent, Hemingbrough, N Yorks

Smartly painted DAF SB220/Optare Delta R200 VHO is in use at Horsforth on schools and Asda free bus services.

Right: Wilts & Dorset 406 (HF05 GJJ), one of the East Lancs Millennium Vyking-bodied Volvo B7TL convertible open-toppers in the mainly red version of the company's new livery.

RICHARD GODFREY

Three Star, Luton

New is allover blue Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton Cheetah KE54 HEJ. On loan from Nextbus is Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton DP K887 UDB, normally used on Luton Borough Council service 52 and re-registered FNZ 7791 while on hire here. Ex-Arriva Cymru Mercedes-Benz 811D K408 BAX has also been repainted allover blue. Berkhof-bodied MAN M311 VNU has passed to Vale, Great Kingshill (dealer).

Thurmaston Bus, Leicester

Two more MCW Metrobuses here are POG 533Y and GYE 565W from NJ Travel, Rushey Mead.

TLC Travel, West Bowling, Bradford

New Optare Solo M850s MX54 KXV-X follow on from Aleros YN53 STX, SVC, YHG of a year earlier.

TM Travel, Staveley

New Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton Beaver 2s YN54 WWU/V are in fleet livery and have LED electronic destination displays. A new Volvo B12M coach is reported on order. Volvo B10M/Plaxton P66 HMC and Scania/Van Hool R7 TMT have been sold.

Transit Group, Stansted

Ex-McKindless, Wishaw Leyland Olympian/ECW A563 KWWY was on loan from Ensign, Purfleet (dealer), which has since sold it to Fargo, Rayne.

Travel Express, Wolverhampton

Latest vehicle acquired is former JP Travel, Middleton MUI 1346 (G37 TGV), a Dennis Dart 8.5SDL3003/Carlyle Dartline B28F, one of many that started life in London and are now in the West Midlands.

Travel West Midlands NX

A Scania OmniCity double-deck demonstrator is due in service here this year.

Although in steep decline, the MCW Metrobus can still sprout minor new livery variations, one being to dedicate 2750 (A750 WVP) to the Blyth Valley Link in Solihull, with a coloured roundel bearing service 166 on fleet livery. Metrobuses 2601 (POG 601Y), 3075/90/4 (F75, 90/4 XOF) have been reinstated.

Withdrawn are Leyland Lynx 1155 (G155 EOG) and Metrobuses 2612/28/9/44 (ROX 612Y etc) and 2717/76/99 (A717 UOE, B776 AOC, B799 AOP). Sold are Metrobus 2501 (POG 501Y, for scrap) and 2629, 2850 (ROX 629Y, B850 AOP). Six Metrobuses have been donated to the Tsunami Asia Bus Response appeal.

Trent Barton WG

New are Scania L94UB/Wright Solars are 665-7 (FH54 BRX/Y/Z), in Trent Barton livery.

Optare Solos 414-18/20 are to be painted brown for the revised Radcliffe services, 414/8/20 first treated. Kinchbus Dart 899 is expected to come out of storage at Langley Mill and be repainted for use on the Trent Barton Borrowash Flyer service.

The 20 Optare Excels stored since withdrawal have been sent to New Zealand. They were due to have been exported in mid-February.

The company has supported the Asia Bus Response after the Boxing Day Tsunami disaster and was one of the first to pledge vehicles to be sent to Indonesia and Sri Lanka by donating two Volvo B10B/Northern Counties Paladins, two MAN 11.190/Optare Vectas and a minibus. These are being loaded with supplies and join around 105 vehicles (as at 14 March) leaving our shores in this way.



MAN 11.190/Optare Vecta-bodied 805 (M805 PRA) has passed to Bluebird, Middleton as dealer and Mercedes-Benz Varios 284/7 (R284 LNU, S287 UAL) have been withdrawn for disposal.

Tussauds, Alton

Rental Dennis Dart SLF/Alexander ALX200 VX51 RBY is on loan from Mistral, Knutsford (dealer).

Tyne Blue Line, Low Prudhoe

This operator has acquired Optare Solo M920/B33F Y256 KNB from Wilson, Rhu.

UK Coaches, Countesthorpe

Ex-Travel West Midlands MCW Metrobus MkII A738 WVP is one of many recently moving to Leicestershire.

Vallance, Annesley, Notts

Another Duple 425 integral coach in service is YJI 5231 (E207 BOD), purchased from Wold Travel, North Dalton. Similar YJI 5232 (E218 CFJ) from the same source is being used for spares.

Val's Classic, Chasetown

Former First Cymru Duple 425 integral MKH 487A is here.

Warrington Borough Transport

As well as the six VDL SB120/Wright Merits due this July, a further six are on order for February 2006. It's now reported that there won't be any Wright Eclipse-bodied Volvo B7TLs this year as originally thought, but one may be purchased next year, with a second the year after.

In a reversal of recent trends, Dart SLF 10 (V210 JLG) has had a mainly white overall advert livery applied, for Warrington Social Services Fostering and Adoption with contrivance across its windows.

Further to the feature article last month, Warrington bus station closes in July for redevelopment. A temporary facility will be provided on the plot opposite, nearer Central Station, until the new bus station is ready.

Westring, Chichester

Ex-Stagecoach Buseswys Scania N113CRB/Alexander PS-type B51F G922 TCU has been acquired via Ensignbus (dealer), Purfleet.

Wilfreda Beehive, Adwick-le-Street

Six new Optare Solos are being delivered for South Yorkshire PTE Rural Links work, and five are in Rural Links blue and yellow livery. Two are B24F 7.8m SlimLines, the rest B28F 8.5m models. SlimLines YJ54 UB/P/R/U are reported on loan from Optare pending their delivery.

Meanwhile, the Mercedes-Benz Vario is still in favour, latest being Plaxton Beaver 2-bodied YN54 DCE.

New BMC Probus school bus YN54 XBO has been noted is in use while a yellow Scania/Irizar S-Kool bus has also been delivered.

Williams, Camborne

Acquisitions are Leyland Olympian ONTL11/2Rsp/ECW CH45/28F PJ1 4893 (B577 LPE) from Tim's Travel, Sheerness, Olympian ONLXB/1R/East Lancs bus A516 VKG new to Cardiff and Scania N113DRB/Alexander H45/31F H215/7 LOM from Kings Ferry, Gillingham but formerly Travel West Midlands.

Wilts & Dorset GA

New Volvo B7TL/East Lancs Millennium Vyking convertible open-top double-deckers 405-13 were all delivered by February in the new predominantly red standard livery. In service at Poole in March were 405/6 (HF05 GGE/JJ).

Salisbury has MetroRider 2511 (J511 RPR) from Damory (its 6113) and has sent 2507/8 (J507/8 RPR) to Damory as its 5137/8.

The remains of Optare MetroRiders 5134 (J504 RPR), 2527 (K527 UJT), 2611 (R611 NFX) and DAF DB250/Optare Spectras 3102/3 (K102/3 VLJ) have gone for scrap. Former London Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties R332/69 LGH have been noted on driver training.

Damory Coaches has Optare MetroRiders 5124 (K524 UJT) from Tourist Coaches and 5137/8 (J507/8 RPR) from the main fleet, while Volvo B10M coaches 5024/37 (LIL 2665, G56 RGG) are in reserve.

Tourist has LDV 400 6168 (N614 HRV, the former 5166) from reserve, while MetroRider 6113 (J511 RPR) and LDV Convoy 6124 (P94 DOE) passed to Damory.

Winson, Loughborough

Acquisitions are former Nottingham City Volvo B10M Citybus/Alexander G333 NRC and G335 PAL.

Woods, Wigston, Leicester

New are Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver 2 541-4 (YN54 WCO/Y/Z/P) in a metallic blue version of Leicestershire's Cross County livery.

Yeomans Canyon, Hereford

A full-size addition is BMC Falcon BU04 CAX, recorded on service 449 (Hereford-Madley). Optare Solo SlimLine former demonstrator YK04 KWL has been acquired and was noted on service 76A (Hereford-Batonsham).

Yorkshire Coastliner BL

The single-deck fleet has been completely renewed with Volvo B7RLE/Wrightbus Eclipse Urban DP44F 450-5 (YJ05 FNH/K-O), and not as reported last month, replacing B10BLE/Wright Renown 441-6 (X441 YUB, YD02 UMU-X, PN02 HVZ), to be cascaded elsewhere in the Blazefield Group; Burnley & Pendle is now suggested.

Yorkshire Traction YT

Volvo Olympian 613 (P905 RYO) is now converted to H47/27F from H47/27D. 620 (R923 JMV) is following suit.



Above: Blazefield has replaced all of the single-deckers in its Yorkshire Coastliner fleet with Wright Eclipse Urban-bodied Volvo B7RLEs like 454 (YJ05 FNN). The original plan was that these would have been high-floor Eclipse Commuters. **TONY HALL**

It is confirmed that fire-damaged Volvo B6BLE/East Lancs Spryte 132 (S132 WKY) is being scrapped, but accident-damaged Volvo B10M-55 Citybus/East Lancs 904 (E737 HFW) is being rebuilt.

Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton 61/2 (6087 HE, OHE 50) reverted to their original R761/2 XWG before sale. Optare MetroRiders 353/7/9-61/7/9 (M201 URC, N207/9-11/7/9 VRC) are in store at Barnsley & District, leaving just four MetroRiders in use at Barnsley (370-3).

Further Leyland Olympians withdrawn are 614/6/27/47/8/51/70/1 (SHE 614/6Y, UKY 627Y, A647/8/51 OCK, C670/1 GET), 614 passing for scrap, 624 to Maghull Coaches, Bootle, 616/27/48/70 to

Alpine, Llandudno. The remains of cannibalised 640 have also gone. Leyland National driver trainer T5 (CBV 771S) is withdrawn and Leyland Lynx 284 (E24 UNE) was noted on the 'scrap' line at Barnsley in February. Two single-deckers have been donated to the Tsunami Asia Bus Response appeal.

Following last month, the report on vehicles coming from Blazefield may have been premature. Certainly if those exact vehicles are involved, they won't be coming for a while.

Zak's, Great Barr, Birmingham

Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall Capital B43F S722 KNV and East Lancs Spryte-bodied R521 YRP are in use.

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Apologies to regular correspondents Geoff Mills and Jeff Nelson for the erroneous omission of their names from recent acknowledgement sections.

FLEET IN FOCUS

FLEET:

Simon and Lyn Weaver trading as Weavaway Travel

BASED:

New Greenham Park, Newbury; also Oxford Road, Chieveley and Montague Street, Caversham

FOUNDED:

1997 with two coaches. In March 2001, took over five-coach Bennett's of Chieveley from Alfa Travel of Chorley. Acquired four-vehicle Hayward's Coaches of Reading last October, along with the Caversham base.

WHERE DOES IT OPERATE?:

Around 20 supported services for Hampshire, Oxford, West Berkshire, Reading, Swindon and Wokingham councils serve Thatcham, Newbury, Reading, Abingdon, Hungerford, East and West Ilsley, Whitechurch, Wantage and Swindon. Specialises in local bus services, school transport, private hires and rail replacements.

LIVERY:

Tampa red and silver or schoolbus yellow. Local buses carry Newbury & District fleetnames, frontline coaches trade as A World of Difference, those at Caversham as Haywards Reading & Basingstoke. Seventy-seat school coaches carry 'The Class of 70' names, while two yellow double-deckers have 'Noah Vale' names with National Bus Company-style double-N logos. Most vehicles have cherished registrations and some are named.

HOW MANY VEHICLES?:

Operator licence is for 30.

MOST INTERESTING VEHICLE?:

Double-deckers fall into this category. Two East Lancs Cityzen-bodied Scania N113DRBs bought new in 2000 have since been sold. Nine former New World First Bus 12m tri-axle 106-seaters came three years ago as schoolbuses; seven are Duple Metsec-bodied Dennis Condors, two are MCW Super Metrobuses. Some are being replaced by the first production Volvo B9TLs for service anywhere in the world — six 12.4m low-floor 102-seaters with East Lancs Millennium Nordic bodies.



Above: East Lancs-bodied Scania N113DRB W19 CKY (X70 OXF, X501 AHE) on West Coast Mainline rail replacement work at Hemel Hempstead in September 2002. It was sold later to Roberts Coaches, Hugglescote. **ANDY IZATT**

GROUP CODES

AA

Arriva
Passenger
Services

BL

Blazefield
Holdings

DG

Comfort
Delgro

EB

Ensignbus

EY

EYMS
Group

FG

FirstGroup

GA

Go-Ahead
Group

NX

National
Express
Group

SG

Staus Bus
& Coach
Group

ST

Stagecoach
Group

TD

Transdev

TGM

Tellings -
Golden
Miller

WG

Wellglade
Group

YT

Traction
Group

Scottish reports should be sent, please, to: **Sandy Macdonald, 12 Morton Gardens, Maxwell Park, Glasgow, G41 4AF** to reach him by **17 May** for the **July** issue.

Allander, Milngavie

Plaxton Profile-bodied Volvo B7R AT63 (SF03 ACU) and Jonckheere Modulo-bodied AT74 (SF53 MGO) were re-registered 9237 AT and 9446 AT respectively by March.

Armstrong, Castle Douglas

A new Optare Solo SlimLine, partially funded by Dumfries & Galloway Council, is due for use on the Dumfries-Moniave service

Avondale, Clydebank

This company has recently been awarded additional contracts by Strathclyde Passenger Transport to operate tendered services for renewal in mid-July. Monday to Saturday daytime service 30 (Maryhill-Anniesland) is currently part of First Glasgow service 30; Monday to Saturday daytime 49 (Milngavie Station-Westerton/Kessington) is provided at present by Henderson, Hamilton between Milngavie Station and Glasgow city centre; and Lanark Ring'n'Ride service 800 is currently operated by McKindless, Wishaw. Another contract has been awarded to provide a new Gryffe Ring'n'Ride service in rural Renfrewshire from mid-July; this will incorporate the Renfrew Dial A Bus service M95 and the evenings/Sundays subsidised service 307 (Johnstone Station-Lochwinnoch), currently operated by Gillen, Port Glasgow.

Brown, Edinburgh

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-55 X576 BYD was sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in February.

Christie, Alloa

Kässbohrer Setra S210HD IJI 336 (A18 MHD, G623 BRT, 221 GRA, 9466 MW, 7572 MW) passed to Ebdon, Crayford last September.

Coakley, Motherwell

Four new Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts were purchased in March, having apparently been a cancelled order for Cardiff Bus. Although repainted allover red, they were not registered in March and were not expected to enter service for another month, to allow them to have closed circuit television, LED destination equipment and cash vaults fitted.

Plaxton Pointer B40F-bodied Dennis Dart 9.8SDL K470 SKO was added to the fleet in February, having previously been Arriva Southern Counties 3170.

Further to last month's issue, new Monday to Saturday service 177 (Coatbridge town centre-Townhead) started on 8 March, exactly duplicating Stepend service 77.

Cosgrove, Dundee

Iveco Daily 49.10 L259 HKS was sold last August.

Davidson, Bathgate

Plaxton B25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L255 YOD and similar Alexander (Belfast) B25F-bodied K113 XHG were reported to be with this operator by March.

Service 91 (Livingston bus station-Broxburn, East Mains Industrial Estate) which was started on 17 January, was due to be cancelled from 27 April. The award of Bus Route Development Grant funding of £971,000 to West Lothian Council will allow this company to provide improved services between Blackridge and Livingston, including a direct link with St John's Hospital.

DJ International, Barrhead

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-62 RIL 4630 (M659 ROS, XUF 456, TSV 677, M254 FYS) has had branding for Scottish Citylink service 901 (Glasgow-Gourock) applied to its all-white livery.

Doig, Glasgow

A most interesting addition to this fleet in March was East Lancs H47/33F-bodied Scania N94UD OmniDekka YN05 HFY, the first new low-floor double-decker for a Scottish 'independent' operator and only the second example of this type north of the border. Irizar PB-bodied Scania tri-axle YN05 HFX and Irizar Intercentury-bodied Scania K114 YN05 HFZ were new at the same time, and all three of these vehicles are finished in allover silver. A very different double-decker also added to the fleet recently was ECW H43/31F-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB BMA 524W, previously with Smith, Marple.



Above: Despite the arrival of 84 new Wright-bodied Volvo B7TLs, First Glasgow has repainted 22-year-old Alexander-bodied Volvo Ailsa 31221 (B27 YYS) in its new universal Barbie livery. It is based at the company's Scotstoun depot and is equipped with seatbelts for schools services. **PHIL HALEWOOD**

Dumfries & Galloway Council

Plaxton Beaver 2 B31F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D R941 AMB (B88 BUS, R941 AMB) and similar DP27F-bodied R827/8 FSX were acquired from King, Kirkcowan in March for the DGC Buses fleet.

Essbee, Coatbridge

A new Essbee C24F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D in March was 22 (SF05 HNM), which is in allover white with red stripes. Plaxton Cheetah C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D X441 JHS was acquired in November ex-Hilton, Newton-le-Willows.

Crystals-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D P3 OBS was withdrawn when X441 JHS was acquired.

Fairline, Glasgow

Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-62 GSO 84V (L756 YGE) was given back its original registration and sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis last November.

First Aberdeen FG

New Wright Eclipse Gemini-bodied Volvo B7TLs 32539-41 (YJ05 VWG/E/F) were obtained on loan from First West Yorkshire for the Commonwealth Local Government Conference at Aberdeen Exhibition & Conference Centre from 15-17 March, but were still present later in the month.

First Edinburgh FG

A quality partnership agreement has been signed with West Lothian Council, covering services linking Bathgate and Livingston with Edinburgh. The council will spend £500,000 replacing shelters and upgrading kerbs at bus stops, while First Edinburgh will introduce 17 new East Lancs-bodied Scania N94UD OmniDekka double-deckers on services 27 and 28 from Livingston in June at a cost of £2.5 million. A further five OmniDekkas are also reported on order for Linlithgow depot.

Below: YN05 HFY, the East Lancs-bodied Scania OmniDekka for Doig's of Glasgow alongside the company's recently acquired former Crossville Bristol VRT. It is only the second OmniDekka for a Scottish fleet, but as also reported this month, First Edinburgh has ordered 22 for routes serving West Lothian. **BILLY NICOL**



Successful Bus Route Development Grant schemes to benefit this company were submitted by East Lothian Council for improvements in the Dunbar to Edinburgh corridor (£116,000), Falkirk Council to enhance and extend Falkirk Circle routes 10/11/12 (£480,000) and Scottish Borders Council to improve services 62 (Melrose-Edinburgh) and X95 (Hawick-Edinburgh) with better stops, shelters, passenger information and daytime frequencies increased on each route from hourly to half-hourly.

Alexander Dash-bodied Volvo B6-50 M736 BSJ, Ferryhill Motors Fm16, was on loan at Musselburgh depot during February and March to cover for the absence of accident-damaged Scania 61219.

Plaxton Pointer 2-bodied Dennis Dart 40887 has been painted into the latest corporate colours in lieu of Clackmannanshire Council EasyBoarder livery.

Plaxton Expressliner 2-bodied Dennis Javelin 12SDA 62270 (KSU 390, M293 FAE) reverted to its original registration and lost all lettering from its coach livery by March.

First Glasgow FG

The 12 new Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts entered service at Motherwell depot in March. They are 42877-88 (SF05 KQY/Z, KXA-E/H/J-M) and will replace most of the remaining Leyland Tigers.

Two more Dennis Dart SLFs repainted into corporate colours instead of the allover red used in Ayrshire until now are UVG UrbanStar-bodied 40750 [MD37] and Caetano Compass-bodied 42376 [MD119].

Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympian 31393 [LO81] (L181 UNS) has recently returned to service following repairs to severe accident damage suffered early last year.

Alexander DPH47/28F-bodied Volvo Olympians 31518/22/19 [CO247-9] (WLT 677/910/678, M847-9 DUS) were given back their original registrations before being transferred to First Potteries in February.

Route development awards

Scottish bus services were given a major boost in March with the announcement of the results of the first tranche of applications for Bus Route Development Grant — the Kick-Start scheme promoted by Stagecoach chief executive Brian Souter.

At this stage, £12.232 million grant out of the total three-year budget of £22.5 million has been awarded to 22 of the 54 projects put forward by tendering authorities. City of Edinburgh Council has been awarded £2.007 million; Dundee City Council £1.771 million; Scottish Borders £1.182 million; Strathclyde Passenger Transport £1.165 million; Midlothian £1.016 million; West Lothian £971,000; Highland £943,000; Perth & Kinross £820,000; Aberdeenshire £590,000; Moray £515,000; Falkirk £480,000; Fife £350,000; Angus £306,000; and East Lothian £116,000. Further details are given in Fleet News under the appropriate operator headings.

All of the projects are eligible for funding for three years from their start. It is understood that contracts have to be drawn up between the tendering authority and the operators concerned, and that these contracts will cover the full four-

year period during which the service improvements must operate, including the first year after payment of the grant has ceased.

£10.3 million remains available for further awards and the Scottish Executive wants the scheme to benefit all parts of Scotland. Indicative allocations have been drawn up for Strathclyde Passenger Transport, Fife, Aberdeen City, Dumfries & Galloway, Argyll & Bute, Stirling, Aberdeenshire, East Lothian, Clackmannanshire, Western Isles, Angus, Shetland Islands, Orkney Islands and Falkirk, eight of which have yet to receive any award.

Causeway sells to Rapsons

At the beginning of March, Rapsons Coaches took over Causeway Coaches in Orkney and moved close to having a monopoly of the islands' bus services.

In October 1984, W. A. Rosie of St Margaret's Hope adopted the appropriate name of Causeway Coaches and began operating between Kirkwall on the Orkney Mainland and St Margaret's Hope on the island of South Ronaldsay via the intervening

islands of Holm and Burray, all joined by the Churchill Barriers. This had been the original route provided by James Peace of Kirkwall, who gave it up to Rosie just when he looked like reaching a monopoly of bus services in Orkney.

Causeway has been providing this service since then, but the proprietor wanted to retire. Six of the seven vehicles have passed to Rapsons, and it is understood that the remaining coach is being sold privately. Meantime, Rapsons is continuing to operate from Causeway's St Margaret's Hope.



Right: Causeway Coaches HRO 2Y, a Plaxton Paramount-bodied Bedford YNT, at Kirkwall Harbour last July. It has been numbered 141 by Rapsons. MURDOCH CURRIE

Operation of the Glasgow City Tour, acquired from Michael Roulston (trading as Glasgow Corporation Transport) in December 2003 and operated officially from March 2004, is being given up from 30 April. Ironically, Alexander O45/29D-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68A/1R 39903 (HRS 271V) was transferred from First Devon & Cornwall by Easter and was at Larkfield depot in allover white (ex-Barbie 2 livery).

Buyers are being sought for seven 'heritage' buses used on the tour, including 1958 Alexander H41/32R-bodied Daimler CVD650-30 (Gardner 6LW) 39999 [D217] (FYS 999) which appeared at the 1957 Scottish Motor Show; 1959 Glasgow Corporation O29/28R-bodied Leyland Titan PD2/24 39998 [L108] (FYS 8, HSK 953, LDS 388A, SGD 10); similar 1958 Alexander H33/28R-bodied 39997 [L163] (SGD 65); and 1961 Alexander H41/31F-bodied Leyland Titan PD3/2 39996 [L446] (SGD 448).

All four carry 1950s Glasgow Corporation Transport green, cream and orange livery. Some of the AEC Routemasters used on the tour will also leave the fleet as there is insufficient work for all of them, and 39390 (JJD 390D) was transferred to First Devon & Cornwall in March.

Bus Route Development Grant awarded to Strathclyde Passenger Transport will allow this company to extend service 3 to from the city centre to Townhead; extend service 38 from Garthamlock to Gartcosh; introduce new all-week night services between Glasgow city centre and Glasgow Airport, Cathkin, Sandyhills, Garthamlock and Milton; and start a weekend night service between Glasgow and Eaglesham.

Gibson, Moffat

Van Hool Alizée T9 C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-55 W249 GSE joined this fleet in March ex-Whyte, Newmachar.

Gillen, Port Glasgow

Plaxton Beaver B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 711D L656 MYG was acquired in March ex-Henderson, Hamilton.

Glasgow Citybus

Optare Solo SlimLine M850 demonstrator YN04 LXD was on loan to this firm from 19 March and used on services 83 (Blairdardie-Clydebank) and 84 (Old Kilpatrick-Partick) from 21 March.

Hall, Kennoway

Leyland Lynx E113 RBO had gone by last July and Plaxton-bodied AEC Reliance LCX 159W passed to Gilkes, West Kingsdown in December.

Harte, Greenock

New hourly Monday to Saturday service HB005 (Largs-Braehead shopping centre via Kilbirnie, Lochwinnoch and the Johnstone by-pass) was started on 11 April.

Two coaches acquired from Hayton, Burnage in March for use on it were Jonckheere Deauville C48F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 YIL 4028 (M833 ECS) and similar Plaxton Premiere 350 C48F-bodied P59 XNL. They have been repainted into a revised version of fleet livery retaining the orange and brown but with a different shade of beige.

Plaxton Pointer 2-bodied Dennis Dart SLF IIB 3278 (S609 HGD) passed to Wilson, Gourcock in March although it is expected that the cherished registration will be returned in due course.

Henderson, Hamilton

Three more B29F-seated Optare Solo M880s were due to be delivered by April.

As reported above, Plaxton Beaver-bodied Mercedes-Benz 711D L656 MYG was acquired by Gillen, Port Glasgow in March.

Operation of Strathclyde Passenger Transport service 49 (Milngavie Station-Glasgow city centre) is due to pass to Avondale, Clydebank in mid-July, albeit in a truncated form as a local service within Milngavie and Bearsden.

Highland Heritage, Dalmally

Van Hool C59F-bodied Volvo B12BT tri-axle coaches SN54 LRL/O were new in February, with similar SN05 DVW-Z/WA/C-G/J-L following in March. Fleetnames carried by these vehicles include *Clan Appin* (SN05 DWC), *Clan Balquhider* (SN05 DWG), *Clan Cameron* (SN05 DVX), *Clan Duart* (SN05 DWF), *Clan Fechar* (SN05 DWL), *Clan Glendochart* (SN05 DWE), *Clan Lorne* (SN05 DWA), *Clan MacDonald* (SN05 DVZ), *Clan MacGregor* (SN05 DVV), *Clan MacIntyre* (SN05 DWD) and *Clan Murray* (SN05 DWK).

Displaced by these new arrivals, Van Hool Alizée T9-bodied Volvo B10M-62s R778/81/7/9/90 WSB were sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in January together with similar Jonckheere-bodied Y187 KCS (LSK 500) and Y523 UOS (LSK 505). R778/81/90 WSB passed to West, Raynes Park; Cooper, Killmarsh; and Marshall, Baillieston respectively in February.

Horsburgh, Pumphreston

On 4 April, this operator started new hourly, Monday to Saturday service 92 (Livingston bus station-Broxburn, East Mains Industrial Estate), similar to the recently introduced Davidson, Bathgate service 91.

Houston, Lockerbie

B21F-seated Optare Solo SlimLine YJ54 ZXZ, partially funded by Dumfries & Galloway Council, was new in February for use on the Lockerbie town service.

Irvine, Law

Recent additions to this fleet comprise Plaxton Prima C53F-bodied Volvo B7R Y173 CGC (Y4 HCT) ex-Harding, Betchworth in December and Caetano C49F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 M40 CLA (REL 575, M40 CLA) ex-Reliant, Heather in January. Nottingham City Transport-livered Alexander H47/33F-bodied Scania N113DRB G368 RTO arrived on loan from Redline (dealer), Penwortham in January, having been last used by Courtesy, Chadderton.

Rare Noge Catalan 370-bodied MAN 24.400 T871 JBC was sold to Hansar (dealer), Cheadle Hulme last August, while Van Hool Alizée-bodied Scania K93 PIL 5407 (J233 XKY) and similar K113 TIL 8172 (L420 LHE, YNH 1W, L420 LHE) were sold to Caetano (dealer), Heather in January.

From 4 April, commercial service 48 (Motherwell-Law) was diverted via Carbarns under a new contract from Strathclyde Passenger Transport to replace the Hutchison, Overtown service 7, withdrawn between Wishaw and Carbarns last December.

King, Kirkcowan

B25F-seated Optare Solo SlimLine YJ05 JXT, partially funded by Dumfries & Galloway Council, was new in March for use on the Newton Stewart town service. Other new arrivals at that time were Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814Ds SF05 FNS/T.

Other recent additions comprise Van Hool Alizée C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 N276 HSD (JX1 317, N276 HSD) ex-Bruce, Salsburgh in January; and East Lancs EL2000 B41F-bodied Volvo B10M-55s H912/20 XYT, ex-Arriva by March.

Duple-bodied Dennis Javelin 12SDA F791 UJS was sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in January, and Plaxton Beaver 2-bodied Mercedes-Benz Varios R941 AMB (B88 BUS, R941 AMB), R827/8 FSX had passed to Dumfries & Galloway Council by March.

continued overleaf...

Lafferty, Glenboig

Plaxton-bodied DAF SB2300 C647 OVH was sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in November and passed to Bryson, Bonnybridge in January.

Lochs & Glens, Aberfoyle

An order has been placed for five 13.75m, tri-axle Volvo B12Bs with Jonckheere Mistral 70 C57Ft coachwork. This is the second part of a three-year plan to replace the entire fleet with longer coaches with I-shift transmission.

Lothian LB

As reported in this month's News section, five 12m Scania OmniCity double-deckers have been ordered for the airport service along with 50 Wright Eclipse Gemini-bodied Volvo B7TLs for regular services and another five Wright Urban Eclipse-bodied Volvo B7RLE single-deckers. The B7RLEs will be used to increase the frequency of service 22 (Gyle Centre-Ocean Terminal) from every 5min to every 4min and to accommodate the extra passengers which have resulted from the Fastlink guided busway introduction and the other West Edinburgh bus priorities.

Plaxton President-bodied Volvo B7TLs 291/6 had been converted to single-door layout and repainted in the most recent harlequin livery by March.

Successful Bus Route Development Grant schemes put forward by the City of Edinburgh and Midlothian councils will result in the following service improvements: 17 (Granton-Craighouse) extended to include West Harbour Road to serve the new Granton Waterfront development which currently has no bus provision; 24 (Edinburgh Park-Edinburgh Royal Infirmary) improved from the current patchy service to half-hourly on Mondays to Saturdays, 07.00-19.00; 30 (Wester Hailes-Musselburgh) increased from five to six buses per hour to create a turn-up-and-go service to help link areas of social need with opportunities for education, leisure and employment; 31 (East Craigs-

Bonnyrigg) altered in anticipation of the projected demand coming from planned new housing in South Bonnyrigg; 35 (Ocean Terminal-Sighthill), which links the Scottish Parliament, Ocean Terminal and the old Royal Infirmary site at Lauriston, increased in frequency; X37 (Penicuik-Silverknowes) enhanced to provide all day express services between Penicuik and north Edinburgh, serving significant new developments in Edinburgh city centre and at Granton Waterfront; and 49 (Portobello-Rosewell via Edinburgh Royal Infirmary) extended hours of operation to allowing better access from the north of the city to the infirmary.

It is also reported that all services currently subsidised by the City of Edinburgh Council will be operated on a commercial basis from this year; these include 13 (Blackhall-Findlay Gardens) and 38 (Muirhouse-Edinburgh Royal Infirmary).

McColl, Balloch

MCW H43/30F-bodied MCW Metrobus DR102/27s POG 485/93, 527Y, previously Travel West Midlands 2485/93, 2527, were acquired last year in March, May and November respectively.

MacEwan, Amisfield

Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs SK52 UTT/U, acquired in March 2004 when the HAD Coaches, Shotts business ceased trading, have been prepared for use on Stewartry services with partial funding from Dumfries & Galloway Council for the project.

McGill, Port Glasgow

Seven new Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts were due to join this fleet in March. Optare Solo demonstrator YJ54 BTV was noted on loan on 2 March when it was being used on service 547.

McKindless, Wishaw

Service reductions due on 19 April included renumbering of 44 (Bellshill-Overtown) to 24, which is

to operate only between Coltness and Wishaw town centre every half hour, and alteration of 68 (West Crindledyke-Hamilton town centre) to operate to North Motherwell instead of Hamilton every half-hour instead of four buses per hour. Services 41 (Hamilton-Lanark) and 56 (Hamilton-Shotts) were both to be reduced from six to four buses per hour from the same date. Operation of Strathclyde Passenger Transport Lanark Ring'n'Ride service 800 is due to pass to Avondale, Clydebank in mid-July.

MacLean, Scarinish

This Tíree operator purchased former Ministry of Defence Wadham Stringer C36F-bodied Dennis Javelin 8.5SDA M249 ZWS (75 KK 59, L989 FBL, 75 KK 59) last August. Similar B38F-bodied B277 UFK (31 KC 48) was sold to Munden (dealer), Bristol in part exchange.

McNairn, Coatbridge

Alexander (Belfast) B25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L308 AUT was taken into stock last May, ex-Cutmore, Coatbridge.

MacPhail, Salsburgh

Van Hool Alizée C55F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 L100 NGS (N554 OGE), C49Ft-seated Bova Futura FHD12-340 SA02 PAO, and similar FHD12-370 SA02 PBF joined this fleet from Long, Salsburgh when the two firms were merged towards the end of last year. Vehicles transferred from the previous MacPhail, Newarthill fleet comprised Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-62s P764 VDS, R203/4 MGA, T489 KGB and W558 WGA.

McQueen, Garelochhead

Strathclyde Passenger Transport-liveried, B28F-seated Optare Solo MX05 ENC was new in March, partly funded by SPT for use on service 302 (Helensburgh-Lochgailhead/Carrick Castle) which is jointly subsidised by SPT and Argyll & Bute Council.

FLEET IN FOCUS

FLEET:

Henderson Travel

BASED:

Whistleberry Industrial Estate, Hamilton, South Lanarkshire

FOUNDED:

David Henderson graduated in 1981 and started in business by offering fishing trips in the Firth of Clyde with a boat he had built. He expanded in 1982 by purchasing a non-psv Volkswagen minibus. This led to Henderson Travel being set up on 1 December 1983. David's father Hugh joined him in 1985, and brother John in 1987. School contracts were started before deregulation, but 1986 brought a move into subsidised bus operations on behalf of Strathclyde Passenger Transport, the first services being Cambuslang-Newton, Hamilton-Darvel and Easterhouse-Barlanark. Commercial services were added from 1989, initially on the East Kilbride-Strathaven route.

WHERE DOES IT OPERATE?: LIVERY:

Only local services and school contracts are operated, currently mainly in North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire but extending into Glasgow, East Renfrewshire and East Dunbartonshire.

Initially white with aircraft blue relief, but the white has changed in recent years to pale grey. Short-lived Henderson Citybus and ValuBus initiatives in the 1990s used allover blue. Many vehicles have been operated in SPT orange or, more recently, carmine and cream.

HOW MANY VEHICLES?:

The licence allows for 33 buses to be operated, and around 36 are owned at present. The many Mercedes-Benz L608Ds, 709Ds and Varios which have made up most of the fleet have almost all gone, replaced by various versions of the Optare Solo.

MOST UNUSUAL VEHICLE?:

The more unusual vehicles have been among the larger ones owned, with Van Hool bus-bodied Volvo B10M-56 B947 ASU and Optare Prisma-bodied Mercedes Benz O405 S905 DUB particularly noteworthy past members of the fleet.

Below left: Photographed at Hamilton bus station on 3 August 1998, its first day in service and before its Henderson Travel fleetnames were applied, Optare Prisma-bodied Mercedes-Benz O405 S905 DUB is still considered by the company to have been the best bus ever owned.

Below right: Optare Solo M880 504 (YN04 LXE), new last May, is seen at work on Strathclyde Passenger Transport service 71 (Glasgow-Torrance) on 25 March this year. Most Solos in the fleet carry SPT carmine and cream livery. Pictures by MURDOCH CURRIE



Mac Tours, Edinburgh LB

Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympians 357/8 have been converted to semi-open top format and repainted into an attractive version of the yellow, blue and red Majestic Tour livery.

Mackie, Alloa

SN05 EOY, a new Bova Futura, entered service on 1 March. Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-62 TSV 956 (*RUI 1890, N936 RBC*) was given back its original registration last November and sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in January.

Marshall, Baillieston

Van Hool C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 R790 WSB was acquired in February ex-Highland Heritage, Dalmally.

Mathieson, Inverness

Jonckheere C49F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 S67 UBO was acquired in January ex-Smith, Coupar Angus.

Mayne, Buckie

As anticipated, some of the new vehicles for this fleet had arrived by March comprising Sitcar Beluga C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz O815Ds HM/RM05 GSM; Van Hool Alizée T9-bodied Volvos DM/KM/MM05 GSM; and Marcopolo Viaggio C70F-bodied MAN 18.310 SM05 GSM. A further addition by March for use as a spare coach was Made to Measure C24F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D G185 XHU ex-MacLennan, Shieldaig.

MCT, Motherwell

Jonckheere Millennium Mistral C53F-bodied Volvo B12M SC02 JJZ (2 HW, 12 HM, KSK 980) was acquired in December ex-Park, Hamilton and was followed in January by similar SN02 NGM (*LSK 832*). Marcopolo-bodied Dennis Javelins P9 MCT and R12 MCT have been sold.

Meffan, Kirriemuir YT

Further to the January issue, this firm is still operating the Tuesday-only journeys on Angus Council services 120 (Kirriemuir-Kingoldrum Circular) and 121 (Kirriemuir-Cortachy Circular), but they have been supplemented by Thursday-only journeys operated by Petrie, Forfar for the council.

Milne, New Byth

Further to the report in the April 2004 issue, Ford M14-bodied Ford Transit W52 EHF joined this fleet in June 2003, rather than W53 EHF as previously stated. It was used previously by TLS Hire Drive. Subsequent acquisitions comprise Ford M16-bodied Ford Transit SH53 ZJM and Plaxton C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D SN04 HWF, which were new in October 2003 and August 2004 respectively.

Munro, Jedburgh

Part of the Scottish Borders Council Bus Route Development Grant award is to be used to enhance services 29/30 (Edinburgh-Jedburgh/Kelso) with better bus stops, shelters, passenger information and hourly frequency.

Nicoll, Laurencekirk

N1 CLL, a C53F-seated Bova Futura FHD12-340, was new in January.

Further to the January issue, this operator is also providing four Sunday return trips on services 8/9 (Laurencekirk-Montrose), although they are basically placing journeys required to operate Montrose town service 47.

Park, Hamilton

Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B12Ms P602 YWB (*HSK 645*), SC02 JHY (*HSK 647*), SA02 UCC/D (*HSK 648/50*), PG02 YWA, YVZ (*LSK 830/1*) and SC02 JJZ (2 HW, 12 HM, KSK 980) were sold to Volvo Bus & Coach (dealer), Loughborough in December, followed by similar SW02 VTT (*LSK 825*), SG02 OYW (*LSK 827*), SA02 UCB (*LSK 845*), PG02 YWE (*KSK 952*), PG02 YWD (*LSK 835*), SN02 NGM (*LSK 832*) in January and SN02 NGL/R (*HSK 649/6*), SW02 VTV (*LSK 844*), SW02 VTP (*KSK 953*) in February. New owners for these vehicles include Durham City, Brandon (PG02 YWD) and MCT, Motherwell (SC02 JJZ, SN02 NGM). Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 V86 LYS (*LSK 497*) was acquired by Grenfell, Motherwell in December.

Peace, Skene

Van Hool C55F-bodied Volvo B10M-55 W251 GSE was acquired in January ex-Whyte, Newmachar. Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-62 M222 GSM was sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis at that time.

Petrie, Forfar

Additional Angus Council contracts gained from 10 January comprise those for one late evening journey on service 21A (Forfar-Brechin, Fridays and Saturdays) and Thursday services 120 (Kirriemuir-Lintrathen circular), 121 (Kirriemuir-Cortachy/Dykehead circular), which each provide two journeys. Meffan, Kirriemuir provides Tuesday journeys on these services.

Prentice, West Calder

CH55/22Ct-seated Neoplan Skyliner N122/3 H882 AVK (*H5 DTS, H882 AVK*) was acquired in October ex-Graham, Kilkeel but was not in use by February.

Vehicles re-registered recently comprise Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-61 81 CBK (*CXI 897, F442 YSJ, 2154 K, F451 FKY*) to VSV 632 in December; Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B12T V474 FPT (*TTC 86, V435 EAL*) to 81 CBK in February; and Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-62 OUJ 969 (*S573 KJF*) back to S573 KJF.

Rapson, Tain

B50F-seated, DAF-engined Leyland National NL116L11/1R DOC 38V had joined this fleet by February; it was Rapsons Coaches 134.

Rapsons Coaches RN

The vehicles acquired with the business of Causeway Coaches, St Margaret's Hope comprise Van Hool Alizée C50F-bodied Volvo B58-61 140 (*WIB 7085, WNR 536, TGD 759W*) which was new to Cotter, Glasgow; Plaxton Paramount C53F-bodied Bedford YNT 141 (*HRO 2Y*); Caetano Optimo C22F-bodied Toyota Coaster 142 (*K813 LMY*); Plaxton C31F-bodied Bedford YMP/S 143 (*A162 KLK*); Duple C55F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 144 (*PIL 6829, C663 EHU, UFX 567*); and C36F-seated MAN 145 (*G948 NBC*) of which further details are lacking at present.

Further acquisitions in March were Wright Handybus B40F-bodied Dennis Dart 9.8SDLs J610/23 KCU ex-Dennis's, Dukinfield; Plaxton Beaver 2 B31F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814Ds S593 UPV, S764 XNF ex-Chambers, Bures; and similar R937 AMB ex-Pete's Travel, West Bromwich. Fleetnumbers are not yet known.

Vehicle re-registrations by March involved East Lancs-bodied Volvo B10M-61 177 (*UIJ 412, B859 XYR, B862 XYR*) which has reverted to B859 XYR; Leyland National 11351/2R 181 (*KKZ 5534, GFJ 663N, JIL 7606, GFJ 663N*), to JST 224N; Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-61 440 (*JAZ 9852, B216 FJS*) back to B216 FJS; Plaxton-bodied Bedford YNT 456 (*PDZ 7762, D31 RYB*) back to D31 RYB; Plaxton-bodied Dennis Javelin 11SDL 487 (*L144 BFFV*) to JAZ 9852; and similar 540 (*L143 BFFV*) to UIJ 412.

Carlyle C19-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D 049 (*H106 HDV*); Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-60 407 (*MIL 6675, G810 BPG*); Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-61 412 (*JIL 3391, CHN 587Y, 3085 EL, ONV 647Y*); and accident victim Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 659

(*? , MXI 694, T537 EUB*) have been scrapped. The final registration for 659 is still not known and it is possible that the other two were re-registered before their demise.

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62s 614/25 have been repainted into two-tone blue in lieu of Scottish Citylink colours, while similar 634/67 and Jonckheere-bodied 640 have been given the current Scottish Citylink livery.

Alexander-bodied Volvo Ailsa B55-10 311 (*DSP 928V*) was sold for preservation in February and Leyland National NL116L11/1R 134 (*DOC 38V*) had also been sold to Easter Ross Coaches (Rapson), Tain by then. Carlyle C19-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 067-9 (*G702/4/9 HOP*) had also gone by that time — 069 is with a private owner on Skye.

Highland Council's share of Bus Route Development Grant includes an allowance to upgrade this company's service 26 (Inverness-Cromarty) to every 40min for more efficient use of vehicles, and the introduction of new fully-accessible vehicles.

Shiel Buses, Acharacle

New Plaxton Cheetah C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D SN54 FVG arrived in January and new B33F-seated Optare Solo M920 YJ05 JWX was delivered at the end of February. Partly funded by Hitrans, the Solo entered service in March on the Mallaigh local service, in an all-over silver livery.

Shuttle Buses, Kilwinning

New Strathclyde Passenger Transport-liveried Optare Solo N3 SBL arrived in March as expected, and will be used on the subsidised Irvine-Stewarton service 113.

Silverdale, New Stevenston

Plaxton Beaver 2-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D Y909 BFS had been acquired by Anderson, Ormskirk by last September.

Skyeways, Kyle

Mercedes-Benz Sprinter SY54 AWJ was new in December and Plaxton Cheetah-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario T500 GSM has been sold.

Services operated at present comprise weekday 378a (Kyle of Lochalsh-Glenelg, one return trip per day), Tuesday and Thursday 378b (Kyle of Lochalsh-Broadford Hospital, one return trip per day) and Dial-A-Bus 378, which serves the Shiel Bridge and Glenelg areas at various times of the week.

Slaemuir, Port Glasgow

Plaxton B25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L253 YOD, previously Plymouth Citybus 253, arrived by February.

Smith, Coupar Angus

A new C49Ft-seated Bova Futura FHD12-340 was due to enter service in March. Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-62 S67 UBO was sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in January and passed to Mathieson, Inverness in February.

Southern, Barrhead

In January, Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-62 W200 SOU passed to White Star, Neilston via Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis.

continued overleaf...

Below: Shiel Buses Optare Solo YJ05 JWX — the operator's first Optare and first low-floor bus — at Fort William station. D. McGEACHAN



Stagecoach Bluebird ST

The anticipated appearance in this fleet of new Neoplan Skyliner 50128 mentioned last month has not happened, as this vehicle was allocated to Stagecoach Wales in March after its spell of driver familiarisation duties.

Plaxton Interurban-bodied Volvo B10M-60s 52135 (K565 GSA, TSV 722, K565 GSA), 52142 (K572 DFS), 52175 (L585 JSA, NSU 132, L585 JSA), 52176 (L586 JSA, XRC 487, L586 JSA), 52177 (L587 JSA, ESU 435, L587 JSA) and 52193 (L81 YBB, BSK 756, L81 YBB) were sold to Plaxton (dealer), Anston in March.

This company will benefit from Bus Route Development Grant awards to various councils. In Highland Council's area, Inverness town services 5 and 6 will be combined into one, increasing the frequency to every 5min, and low-floor buses will be introduced, while service 25X (Inverness-Dornoch) will become half-hourly, with an hourly Sunday express, and closed-circuit television will be introduced on the buses. Moray Council will get £515,000 to upgrade service 10 service between Inverness and Elgin. Aberdeenshire Council will get £590,000 for services 101/106/107 on the A90 south/A92 Aberdeen-Stonhaven-Montrose corridor, to improve the inter-peak service from every 30min to every 15min, provide new vehicles, infrastructure and information. Perth and Kinross Council will get £820,000 for the 5/6 and 9/10 services in the Muirton and North Muirton area of Perth, to improve their frequency from every 10min to every 5min; passengers will also benefit from 10 new fully accessible low-floor buses equipped with closed-circuit television and from better infrastructure along the route.

Stagecoach Fife ST

A £350,000 Bus Route Development Grant project submitted by Fife Council in conjunction with this company will result in improved services between Kirkcaldy and Glenrothes, with new buses and more frequent services.

Stagecoach Western ST

Two Wright Eclipse Commuter-bodied Volvo B7RLE coaches have been ordered in conjunction with Dumfries & Galloway Council and with partial funding from the council, for use on service 500 (Stranraer-Dumfries). With delivery expected this summer, these are likely to be the first two production examples of this type to enter passenger service in the United Kingdom. They will also be the first Wright-bodied buses ordered by Stagecoach. Three Optare Solos are also being purchased with council funding, for use on the Stranraer town service.

Plaxton Pointer B27D-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs 34142/3/6/51 (V142/3/6/51 MXV) were transferred to this fleet from Stagecoach London in March. Their arrival has come about through part-funding from Strathclyde Passenger Transport in order to convert the former Docherty, Irvine subsidised service 347 (Ayr-Cumnock via Drongan and Ayr Hospital) to low-floor operation. As a result, they will be repainted into SPT carmine and cream.

Kilmarnock-based Optare Solo 47150 (SF54 RJU), new in December, was expected to be transferred to Arran in April to become the first low-floor bus to be allocated to the subsidised services on that island, courtesy of partial funding by Hitrans. North Ayrshire Council is a member of both Hitrans and Westtrans at present, hence the rather strange situation of a Hitrans-funded bus being used on SPT-arranged services.

Volvo B10M-50s 20424/5 (J24/5 MCW) and Volvo B10M-55s 20715/8 (K715/8 DAO) had been returned by Stagecoach North West by early March, after their spell on loan to assist with the aftermath of the Carlisle flooding.

This company will benefit from the award of Bus Route Development Grant to Strathclyde Passenger Transport for the introduction of a new hourly, express service between Ayr, Prestwick Airport, Kilmarnock, East Kilbride and Hamilton.

Stokes, Carstairs

Vehicles sold during the past year comprise Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D R816 LFV (R815 LFV) to Andybus, Dauntsey in April last year; and ECW-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB MOD 572P to Stuart, Carlisle in January.

Strathgryt YT

£306,000 of Bus Route Development Grant funding has been awarded to Angus Council for a bid prepared in partnership with this company to improve the Forfar town service through use of new low-floor vehicles, an improved frequency and serving an increased number of education, retail and employment sites, as well as integrating with existing inter-urban services. The company will also benefit from the £1.7 million award to Dundee City Council for the cross-city direct project.

Stuart, Carlisle

Irizar C49Ft-bodied Scania K114EB4 YN54 AGO was new in January, while recent secondhand additions comprise C49Ft-seated Bova Futura FHD12-340 SN02 NMP (JW02 BUS) ex-Woods, Tillicoultry in November; Jonckheere C49Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-60 VAZ 2534 (H62 XBD) ex-Turner & Gilson, Chumleigh in January; ECW H43/31F-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB MOD 572P ex-Stokes, Carstairs in January; and Van Hool C48Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-62 B15 STA (RIL 1555, K513 KWT, 8665 WA, K805 HUM) ex-Hawkins, Dewsbury in February.

Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-62 W899 VRE was re-registered LSV 380 in November, but the new registration for similar LSV 380 (P273 XHS) is not known.

Thomson, Glasgow

Berkhof C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 B300 BTW and similar Ikarus Blue Danube C49Ft-bodied F73 UJX were acquired last September, ex-Nuttall, Penwortham and

Pearson, Acomb. In November, they were re-registered MLZ 5951/2 respectively. They were for use in a new venture entitled New Concept Coaches and carry appropriate fleetnames, but an application for an operator licence in this name has not yet been granted.

Marshall C19 B21D-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D M238 UTM was taken into stock in January, ex-Stagecoach Devon 40238, and M110 KBO is another B31F-seated Optare MetroRider MR15 which was in stock by March, ex-Cardiff City Transport 110.

Further to the March issue, Caetano Compass-bodied Dennis Dart SLF T416 LGP was still being used on the Glasgow Airport service in allover red in mid-March.

Travel Dundee NX

The £1.7million Dundee City Council Bus Route Development Grant funding will go towards a cross-city direct service linking the new housing developments at Panmurefield on Dundee's eastern periphery, the city centre, University, Kingsway West retail park, the technology park and Ninewells Hospital. The bid was made in partnership with both Travel Dundee and Strathgryt and it is hoped that the service will be operating from late summer. The funding will also go towards a new bus link road between Ninewells and the technology park.

West Coast, Campbeltown

Further to the January issue, Ikarus B51F-bodied DAF SB220 P204 RUM was acquired in November and was used previously by BCP, Crawley.

Whitelaw, Stonehouse

Further to the February issue, Wright Crusader 2-bodied Volvo B6BLE W672 WGG was only on loan to Eastbourne Buses from Volvo.

Whyte, Newmachar

Concept-bodied Mercedes-Benz 412D R921 DCA passed to Ingleby, York last August and Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-55s W249/51 GSE were sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in January. They were acquired subsequently by Gibson, Moffat and Peace, Skene respectively.

Wilson, Gourock

Plaxton Pointer B35F-bodied Dennis Dart SLF P691 RWU and similar B37F-bodied V800 CBC were added to this fleet in March.

New half-hourly, Monday to Friday Greenock local service 23 (Container Way, Tesco-South Street) was registered in January and due to start on 25 March, but was cancelled in February with an official date for its withdrawal of 27 June.

Wishart, Frickheim NX

In March, Optare Solo W309 (T307 UOX) appeared in a new livery of mainly blue with large Travel Wishart fleetnames in white and gold on the sides and rear.

Woods, Tillicoultry

Plaxton Cheetah C29F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D SF54 CJO was new in January, and a new C49Ft-seated Bova Futura FHD12-340 was due to enter service in March.

Bova Futura FHD12-340 JW02 BUS was sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis last October when it was re-registered SN02 NMP, and it was then acquired by Stuart, Carlisle in November. KVC-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D SL52 CXT was sold to Western (dealer), Newbridge in January.

Left: Two years ago, Stagecoach Western held a farewell running day for its remaining ex-Scottish Bus Group Leyland Leopards with Alexander Y-type bodies. Some are still running and 26-year-old 25797 (BSJ 917T) was working in Dunragit, east of Stranraer, on 29 January. RON LOGAN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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MAJOR OPERATORS

Ulsterbus

The Leyland Tiger/Alexander Q-type DP53F single-deckers built originally as City Express buses with Citybus, 1400-7 (WXI 1400-7) are being refitted with high-backed bus seats similar to those on the Wright Endeavour-bodied Tigers. One of them, 1406, has been transferred here on loan from Metro, used initially at Ballymena, later at Larne.

Also reinstated — at Londonderry — are Leyland Tiger/Alexander N-types 2607 (LXI 6607) and ex-Metro reserve 2613/4 (NXI 4613/4); similar 1022/3 (JXI 1022/3) are back in service at Ballymena, 1042 (KXI 1042) at Great Victoria Street. Following protracted repairs, N-type Tiger 410 (FXI 410) and Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premiere 1579 (EAZ 2579) are back in service at Londonderry and Enniskillen respectively.

Ballymena-based Leyland Leopard/Alexander 261 (YOI 2261) and 322 (BXI 322) have been withdrawn, the former with body defects, the latter with malicious damage.

Sold to Wealden PSV Sales, Tonbridge (dealer) are Mercedes-Benz 811D/Ulsterbus driver trainer 38 (NXI 6938) and Mercedes 709D/Wright TS 876 (TXI 7876).

Flexibus

Optare Solo 1872 (SCZ 3872) has been transferred on loan from Metro.

Delicensed and placed in reserve are Mercedes-Benz 709D replica charabanc 5 (CZ 1988), named *Endeavour* with an Ulsterbus-built body on Wright frames, Volvo B9M/Plaxton Paramount 600 (KXI 600) and Mercedes 709D/Wright TS 830 (NXI 6830). The B9M was originally an Ulsterbus Tours coach, purchased in 1987 for an all-Ireland tour contract with Dutch airline NLM.

Metro (formerly Citybus)

Further Alexander Dennis ALX400-bodied Volvo B7TL double-deckers delivered are 2972-4 (BEZ 8972-4). Following the confusion over registration marks, similar 2971 (BEZ 8971) was spotted in service as BEZ 7971 three weeks after it entered service.

As reported above, Leyland Tiger/Alexander Q-type 1406 (WXI 1406) has been reinstated and lent to Ulsterbus along with Alexander N-type Tigers 2613/4 (NXI 4613/4), while Optare Solo 1872 is on loan to Flexibus.

Bristol RELL6G/Alexander 2532/48 (AXI 2532/48) have joined others with Wealden PSV Sales, Tonbridge (dealer).

Further to last month's reports, the Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus placed in reserve was 627 (CAZ 6627), not 626.

Dublin Bus

Ireland's Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, formally opened the new Harristown Garage on 28 February. Four preserved former CIÉ Leylands — Titan PD3/2 RA30, Leopard E152 and Atlanteans D464 and DF839 — formed a display backdrop alongside the official party.

Overall advertising for the Today FM radio station has been placed on Donnybrook-based Volvo Olympian RV328 and Volvo B6BLE WV10 and on Phibsboro-based RV615.

Route news (effective mid-March) includes amalgamation of routes 31A/B (the 31A no longer exists), with both 31 and 31B terminating at Howth Summit. Some journeys on route 116 have been cancelled owing to disappointing demand.

Bus Éireann

Two East Lancs Pioneer-bodied Volvo Olympians new to Metrobus have been acquired and converted to single-door open-toppers. OT1 (98 C 24747, *S850 DGX*) is at Cork, where it replaces Leyland Atlantean/Van Hool McArdle DF795 (795 BIK) on the Blarney Tour. As-yet-unidentified OT2 will replace Metsec-bodied Atlantean DF454 (454 ZD) at Limerick.

New Scania K114/Irizar PB coaches SP1-18 are for CIÉ Tours at Limerick (SP1-9) and Broadstone (SP10-8), while SP19-30 are destined for cross-border Express services worked by Broadstone (SP19-22) and Stranorlar (SP23-30).

Right: Bus Éireann OT1 (98 C 24747, S850 DGX), one of two ex-Metrobus East Lancs Pioneer-bodied Volvo Olympians acquired to replace ex-CIÉ Atlantean open-toppers, on the Blarney Tour in March. STEPHEN LYNCH

SP21 is registered 05 D 30065. Entry into service of SP19-30 will lead to the withdrawal of Volvo B10M/Plaxton VP93-104 (00 D 21108, 21094/87/98/76/84, 25925/1/19, 25883/73/64), the final group of leased coaches with Bus Éireann.

Ex-Go North East Optare Excels P932 ACU, R833-9 NRG, R340 NTY are confirmed numbered DP1, 9-17 (97 D 67771/3/80/76/8/82/74/5/7/9). They had neither entered service nor been allocated as we closed for press in late-March.

Limerick-based DAF MB230LT/Van Hool Alizée DVH14 (93 D 19590) — immortalised on a Corgi model — has been cascaded from public to schools duties. For the past few months, Athlone-based DAF SB220/Alexander Setanta DA6 has been operating the weekday Roslink-branded commuter service between Lanesboro, Roscommon Town and Athlone. It is out-based overnight at Lanesboro. This is the only DA still in public service; the other nine are schoolbuses.

In order to provide increased seating capacity on Greater Dublin commuter services, VR-class 57-seat Volvo B7R/Plaxton Prima coaches are being transferred from the West of Ireland to either Broadstone or Dundalk in exchange for 53-seat VC-class Volvo B10M/Caetano coaches.

Confirmed withdrawals to note are of Van Hool T815A Acron CVS23 (SI 2023), GAC Rural Buses KS46, 55, 63, 72/5, 82, 112/3 (EZV 46 etc), KS112/3/30/71/2 (PZV 112 etc), KR128 (PZV 128) and KS189/98, 200 (XZV 189 etc). KS63 was destroyed by fire while working near Loughrea, Co. Galway in mid-March. Also withdrawn is DAF MB230LT/Plaxton Paramount PDS14 (90 D 11014), the first of this class to go since PD26 was destroyed maliciously at Newry in 1996.

Below: One of 12 Irizar PB-bodied Scania K114 coaches for Bus Éireann's cross-border Express services, SP21 (05 D 30065) was handed over just before Easter. DARREN HALL



OTHER OPERATORS

Aerdart DG

This shuttle service linking the Dart train system with Dublin Airport ceased on 20 March, nearly four years after it started with a fleet of Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Darts. The company — part-owned by Metrolink of London — blames its demise on its inability to attract sufficient numbers of passengers plus the impact of weekend closure of the northern section of the Dart system.

Collins, Carrickmacross

A new MAN-powered Van Hool integral coach here is registered 05 MN 1128.

Dualway (McConn), Rathcoole

The second new Volvo B7TL/East Lancs Vyking open-topper is 05 D 28639 while the similar new coach-seated closed-top example is 05 D 28851.

J.J. Kavanagh, Urlingford

New 12m Mercedes-Benz Citaro 05 WD 1111 has joined similar 03 WD 1111 on Waterford City Services.

The complete list of new Setra S415-HD coaches delivered last year is 04 CW 1, 04 CW 11, 04 D 11, 04 KE 1, 04 KE 11, 04 KK 1, 04 KK 11, 04 TN 11, 04 TS 1, 04 W 1, 04 WD 1, 04 WD 11. This year's delivery comprises 05 CW 1, 05 CW 11, 05 D 11, 05 D 111, 05 KE 1, 05 KE 11, 05 KK 1, 05 KK 11, 05 TN 1, 05 TN 11, 05 TS 1, 05 W 11, 05 WD 1, 05 WD 11 and 05 WD 11.

St Kevin's Bus Service, Glendalough

This operator has recently acquired Van Hool-bodied DAF SB4000 03 KE 3500.

BUSES CLASSIFIEDS

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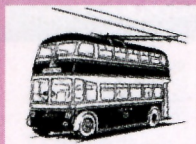
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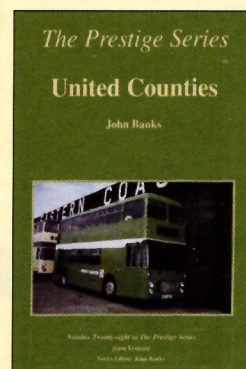
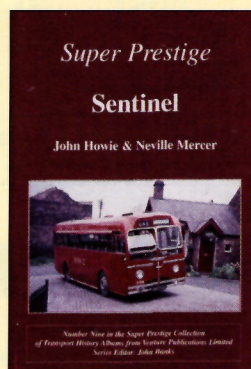
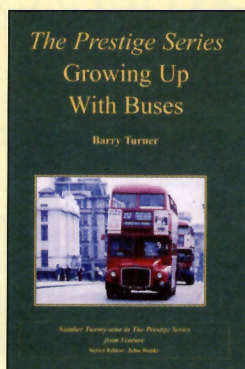
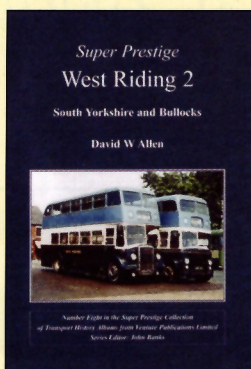
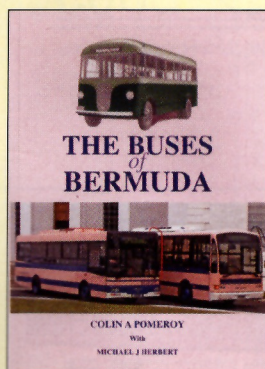
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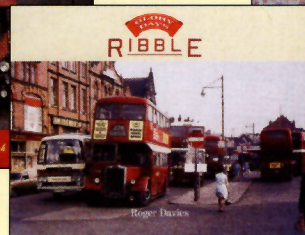
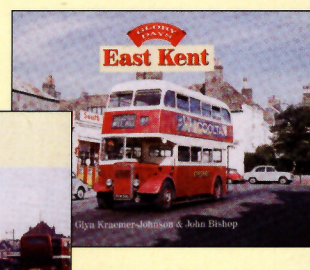
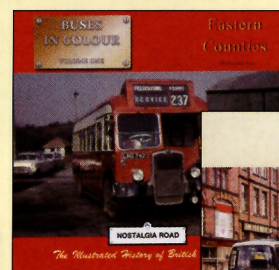
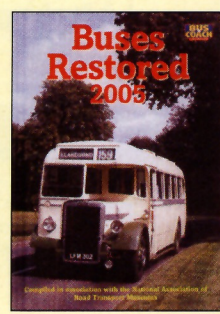
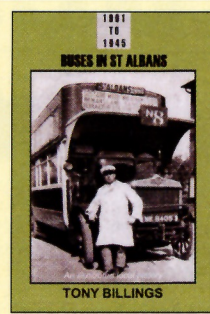
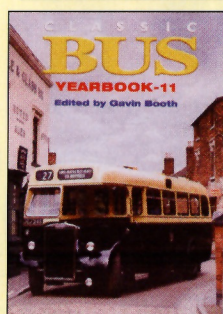
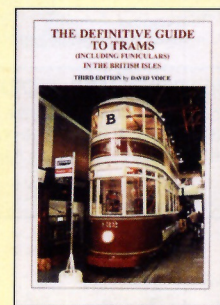
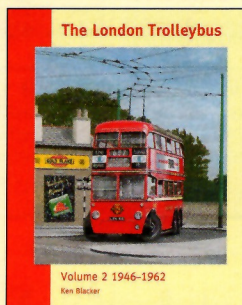
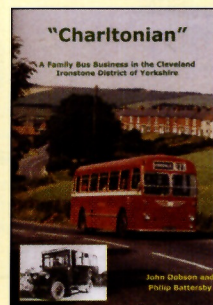
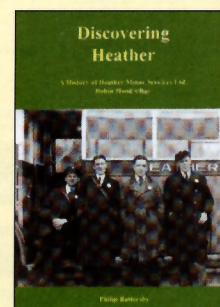
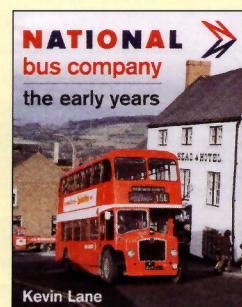
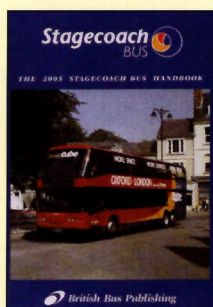
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NEW



RELEASES ISSUE 3 2005

1:76 Scale/00 gauge precision diecast models

Details May Be Subject to Change



29404 Bristol RELH Dual Purpose Coach EAST MIDLAND

The East Midland livery complements the lines of our RELH dual purpose coach. Fleet number C292, registered EVO 292J is on route X53 to Sheffield.

APRIL RELEASE ☐



20436 Bristol VR88 YORKSHIRE RIDER BRADFORD

Continuing to build our Yorkshire Rider fleet is our VR from the Bradford area. Registered NUM 339V, fleet number 748, works route 681 to Bradford Interchange, and complements our recently released GM Fleetline from the Halifax area.

APRIL RELEASE ☐



12307 Harrington Grenadier NORTH WESTERN

The last Harrington Grenadier that we released was in 1993, 12 years ago so this North Western will be a welcome addition to our range. Registered AJA 151B, fleet number 151 is working route X4 to Aberystwyth.

APRIL RELEASE ☐



29607 Leyland Olympian LONDON UNITED

The London United livery suits this style of vehicle creating a fresh clean appearance. Route branded for the 140 Heathrow service, fleet number L296, registered G296 UYK is heading for Heathrow Airport.

MAY RELEASE ☐



18007 MCW Daimler Fleetline BELFAST CORPORATION

Responding to many recent requests for more Irish models is our first from the Belfast Corporation fleet. Registered 558 EZ fleet number 558 is on route 30 to Bloomfield with adverts for 'Drink a Pinta Milk' and a local car hire company.

APRIL RELEASE ☐



20633 Plaxton Pointer Dart WESTERN NATIONAL

Always popular with collectors this Western National Plaxton Dart is unusual as it carries no fleet numbers. Registered L402 VCV it is seen working route X83 to Tavistock and Yelverton.

APRIL RELEASE ☐



13916 Bristol Lodekka FLF STAGECOACH

We saw this Bristol Lodekka in the new Stagecoach livery at Showbus 2004 and thought its striking livery would make a welcome addition to our range. Registered JAH 553D, fleet number 19953 operates route 277 to Stamford.

MAY RELEASE ☐



30901 AEC MKIII Flatbed & Trailer BRITISH ROAD SERVICES

The second release of our modified AEC Mk III casting depicts British Road Services vehicle registration number EVH 23, Lorry & Trailer number 42 D 107 from the Huddersfield Depot, carrying a crated Church organ as a back load from Huddersfield to the docks for shipping to its final destination, Cape Town.

MAY RELEASE ☐

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